

SOME ASPECTS OF SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN BENGAL
1927 to 1936

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Bazlur Rohman Khan

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ABSTRACT

Chapter I discusses Muslim politics in Bengal during the period under review, analysing the social structure of the Muslim community and the background of the articulate segment of that community. The problems of leadership, of the formation of political groups and of their strategies in legislative politics are reviewed, and the responses elicited by the prospect of constitutional advance.

Chapter II deals with Hindu politics in the same years, in both social and strictly political aspects. The nature of the two major groups, at leader and follower levels, and of their ties with fringe groups is discussed, and the objects for which they fought. The relationship of provincial with national and of provincial with Calcutta Corporation politics is discussed, and the general strategies of the provincial Congress.

Chapter III concentrates on student politics—the process of political orientation, and the sociological and psychological factors involved therein. Student organisation and action—their strengths and weaknesses are considered, and the relationship between activist students and elder politicians and party groupings.

Chapter IV deals with the politics of violence—the formation and organization of terrorist parties, their aims and objectives, the response they elicited from government and from constitutional parties, and the effectiveness of terrorism as a political instrument.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| B. A. R. | Report on the Administration of Bengal. |
| B. P. R. | Report on the Police Administration in the Bengal Presidency. |
| C. P. R. | Report on the Police Administration in the Town and Suburb of Calcutta. |
| C. U. C. R. | Report of the Commission appointed by the Government of India to enquire into the condition and prospects of the University of Calcutta, Calcutta University Commission Report, 1919. |
| D. N. B. | Dictionary of National Biography |
| D. P. I. | (Institute of Historical Study, Calcutta). <i>Report on Public Instruction in Bengal</i> |
| F. R. | Bengal Government's Fortnightly Report on the internal political situation. First and second half of month indicated by (1) and (2) respectively. |
| G. of B. | Government of Bengal. |
| G. of I. | Government of India. |
| G. of I. C. P. Procs. | Government of India. Confidential Political Proceedings. |
| I. A. R. | Indian Annual Report. |
| I. Q. R. | Indian Quarterly Report. |
| J. C. E. | Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform (Session 1932-33). Minutes of Evidence given before the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform. |
| J. C. R. | Report of the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform. |
| L/P & J/6 | Public and Judicial Department Papers. |

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| L/P & J/7 | Public and Judicial Papers (Political Files). |
| L/PO. | Private Office Papers. |
| M. M. P. C. I. | Moral and Material Progress and condition of India. |
| Q. R. P. E. B. | Quinquennial Review of the Progress of Education in Bengal. |
| S. C. R. | Sedition Committee Report. |
| Simon Commission, I. | Report of the Indian Statutory Commission. Vol. I - Survey. |
| Simon Commission, II. | <u>Ibid.</u> Vol. II - Report. |
| Simon Commission, VIII | Memorandum Submitted by the Government of Bengal to the Statutory Commission. |
| Simon Commission, XV. | Extracts from Official Oral Evidence. |
| Simon Commission, XVI, and XVII. | Selection from Memoranda and Oral Evidence by non-officials. |
| VR. | Viceroy. |

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to review certain aspects of Bengal politics from 1927 to 1936 with reference to the society of that time. This decade, though a key period in the politics of the entire sub-continent, is still relatively unexplored as regards Bengal, particularly as regards Muslim Bengal. Several works have been written on Bengal dealing with this period. J.H. Broomfield's Elite Conflict in a Plural Society : Twentieth-Century Bengal deals mainly with institutional, particularly legislative politics and concentrates mainly on Hindu politics in the period between 1912 and 1927. L.A. Gordon's Bengal : The Nationalist Movement 1876-1940 concentrates more on personalities; moreover it covers such a long period that the years here in question are of necessity treated cursorily. D.M. Laushey's Bengal Terrorism and the Marxist Left. Aspects of Regional Nationalism in India, 1905-1942 focusses only on one aspect of the Bengali terrorists, namely their conversion to Marxism. Kenneth Mcpherson in his book The Muslim Microcosm : Calcutta, 1918 to 1935 really deals, as the title indicates, only with urban politics in the metropolitan city. J.G. Drummond's 'The Working of the Bengal Legislative Council under the Government of India Act, 1919' (Cambridge University Ph.D. Thesis) too concentrates on legislative politics only. Sumit Sarkar's The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908 does not coincide with my

period, although it helps as a good background work. The decade under review, however, merits a more thorough evaluation than has hitherto been attempted because of the intensive political and constitutional activities which were taking place in Bengal and elsewhere in British India during these years.

The year 1927 opened with a realignment of Hindu and Muslim politicians on communal lines after the breakdown of the Bengal Pact of 1924. In 1923 twenty-one of the thirty-nine Muslim members of the provincial legislature were returned on the Swarajya party tickets ; in 1927 this party could lay claim to only one Muslim member in the Bengal legislature, a pattern that recurred till 1936 when the tenure of the 1919 Act elapsed.

Another landmark in 1927 was the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission) setting in motion a new constitution making process in India and bringing in its trail a wave of political activity in the province. The anti-Simon Commission agitation reinforced by the Congress' adoption of independence as its political goal at the Madras session late in 1927 in turn produced a rift in the ranks of the Congressmen, the Bengal Congress suffering most therefrom. The Congress had dissociated itself from the constitution making process except for Gandhi's attending the Second Round Table Conference as the sole representative of the

Congress.

The year 1936, on the other hand, marks the end of the provincial dyarchy introduced under the 1919 Act. A new constitution providing for a largely extended provincial legislature with a new Upper House and for provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act, 1935 was introduced in Bengal in 1937 following an election under the new constitution. The reasons for taking 1927 as a starting point and 1936 as a terminating point are clear enough.

I have tried to avoid the tedium of mere chronological narration and have endeavoured to explain particular events and political actions in relation to the socio-economic structure of Bengal, and against the sociological and psychological background of the political activists and leaders. I have tried to assess the impact of external influences on the politics of the province, be it communal, revolutionary or nationalist.

The Indian nationalist movement as a whole was not a monolithic one, nor was it in Bengal. Various groups experimented with varying strategies — loyalist, pacifist, constitutional, agitational and even revolutionary. At times different groups entered into unstable and shifting alliances. This study focusses on these shifts and turns in political initiatives. Central to the politics of Bengal during the period was the question of leadership. The problem of communication between the urban leadership and the

predominantly rural masses, personality clashes within political parties and their impact on local and provincial politics in particular and on national politics in general have been noted.

I did not start with a set model but as the reconstruction of events at different levels and situations progressed a pattern or patterns emerged, though not always uniform ones. Ideological debates between modernism and revivalism cut across political trends; nationalism cut across communal and caste lines. Ultimately the model is determined by the British policies and by the peculiar socio-economic conditions of the province. Interestingly the initiative for constitutional advance, whether that initiative encouraged Congress agitation or inter communal antagonism, during the period always came from the British. The Congress and other political groups simply reacted to British moves bringing pressures to bear upon the government for a larger share of power than the government were ready to part with or for other shares between Hindus and Muslims than had been proposed.

The Congress, much as it would claim itself to be the party of all Indians, failed to establish its credibility as an all-embracing body. The Muslims of India, apart from a small minority of them, had their own demands for safeguards of their separateness. But though their politics were

apparently based on religious separatism, behind that strand were deeper socio-economic and psychological reasons. In Bengal the Muslim leaders too, like their Hindu counterparts, had problems of communication with the masses, and in even greater measure, problems of organisation. I have tried to throw fresh light on some of the grosser generalisations and over simplifications concerning the Bengal Muslims and their politics. Did the Muslim community have a homogenous socio-cultural structure as some of their leaders genuinely believed and seem to have succeeded in persuading government to do? In fact the community was not without its share of social tensions. I have made attempts to identify the areas and causes of these tensions whose influence ^{moulded} political attitudes of different groups and subgroups within the community. I have thus tried to relate the activities of various Muslim groups to their political affiliations without applying to them the general label of 'Muslim' politics. I have also tried to identify the social mechanism which at one time brought different groups together but failed to do so at another time, and to find reasons for this.

At the other end of the spectrum of Bengal politics, the provincial Congress was in this period faced with serious organisational problems and a leadership crisis. The questions I have asked here are these: What were the forces working behind factionalism? How did the patrons organise and mobilise their clients? What role did the clients play

in accelerating the power struggle in the party? How did the Congress centre react to continued internal strife in the Bengal Congress? The question of inter-communal relationship has also been examined.

One important feature of the Bengal politics of the late 1920's and the early 1930's was the growing student participation in it and the intensive terrorist activities. I have tried to discern a pattern of relationship between the two and to examine how they fitted into the general nationalist movement under the Congress' leadership. I have attempted to examine the structure of student and terrorist organisations in the context of the society they lived in, its contradictions and stresses. The agitational politics, including the politics of violence were shortlived — it was not only the repressive police action that was responsible for this; the inter-communal relations and isolation of the political leaders from the masses were two other important factors in this regard. The Government of India Act, 1935 had introduced a new and enlarged political chess board with a larger number of pieces on it, although the rules or style of the game did not change much. Any commentary of the game after 1936, however, falls beyond the scope of this review.

CHAPTER I

MUSLIM POLITICS

The 1920s and the 1930s were politically crucial years for the Bengal Muslims. These were the years when the reforms under the Government of India Act, 1919, transferring a good deal of power to Indian hands in the provinces, were at work and new reforms that were to grant provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act, 1935 were being debated both in India and Britain. The Muslim politicians of the province were now required to define their strategies with regard to the Hindus and the British. They had certain qualms about the pace and nature of the new reforms¹ that were to come under the 1935 Act. They feared that as their community was educationally, economically and politically behind the Hindus of the province, further extensions of parliamentary institutions without 'proper and definite safeguards' would place Muslims permanently in a position subservient to the Hindus.² They

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1. See Memorandum by A.K. Ghuznavi, Simon Commission, XVI, II, 181, 188; See also views expressed by Saiyid Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, A.K. Fazlul Huq and A.K. Ghuznavi, Report of the Reform Enquiry Committee, 1924, 1925, Cmd. 2360, 17-18, 35.
 2. Memorandum by A.K. Ghuznavi, Simon Commission, XVI, II, 188.

were already complaining about the inadequacy of their representation in the provincial legislature under the 1919 Act which had given them only forty-six per cent³ of the general seats as against fifty-four per cent⁴ given to the Hindus, although ~~the~~ Muslims formed fifty-four per cent of the population of the province. The depth of the Muslim grievance on this question was clearly demonstrated when early in 1926 Muslim MLCs (members of the Legislative Council) successfully carried a resolution without division recommending proportional representation on a population basis in the legislature.⁵

The re-opening of the question of further constitutional advance by the appointment late in 1927 of the Indian Statutory Commission gave the Bengal Muslims, as indeed all communities and political groups, an opportunity to present their case. The Muslim politicians, however, did not form a compact political party; rather they were

3. Under the 1919 Act, Muslims in Bengal got 39 of the 85 general seats in the Provincial Legislature. Considering the whole House of 140, Muslims got about 28%, while Hindus by virtue of their gains in Special Constituencies claimed about 43% of the seats in a full House.

4. Hindus got 46 of the 85 reserved seats.

5. JBLCP., 1926, XX. I., 146 . . . The passage of this resolution was made possible by a walk out of the Swarajist group from the house.

disarrayed in rival groups, although all of them had uppermost in their minds a concern for the future of their community. Personal rivalry was doubtless often the immediate cause of this factionalism but far deeper causes for it probably lay in the social divisions and differentiations within the community, despite the claim by some for its monolithic socio-economic and cultural structure.

Till the beginning of the twentieth century Muslim society in Bengal was divided into two general classes - the ashraf (the noble-born, aristocracy or gentlefolk) and the atraf (the lower classes).⁶ The ashraf in the town comprised the remnants of the old ruling houses like the stipendiary descendants of the late rulers of Mysore and Oudh, who were stationed in Calcutta.⁷ In the rural areas the ashraf consisted principally of the penurious heirs of the old Muslim administrative and military elite⁸ who had gradually moved to the town, some still holding their

6. A.K.N. Karim, 'The Modern Muslim Political Elite in Bengal' (London University Ph.D. Thesis, 1964), 192-94, R. Levy, An Introduction to the Sociology of Islam (1931-1933), 104; K. Mepherston, The Muslim Microcosm: Calcutta, 1918 to 1935, 10-17. See also Census of India, 1961, I, I, 543.

7. M.K.A. Siddiqui, Muslims of Calcutta. A Study in Aspects of Their Social Organisation, 21, 23.

8. Karim, 196-97.

landed estates. The higher status of the ashraf, which was invariably related to land control,⁹ rested on their claim to foreign descent,¹⁰ their distinctive Indo-Persian language and culture, and their exotic life style to which they had clung steadfastly.¹¹ The ideal criterion for ashraf status was, however, the 'closeness to the Prophet [of Islam] in blood and in faith'.¹² The high social position of the ashraf, which had originally been linked with Muslim political power in India,¹³ in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries depended largely on British patronage and good will.¹⁴

The immigrant Muslims, despite their rich and varied contribution¹⁵ to Muslim society in

9. Karim, 200.

10. Karim, 197; The Muslim Microcosm, 11; A.M. Khan, 'Research About Muslim Aristocracy in East Pakistan. An Introduction', P. Bessagnet (ed.), Social Research in East Pakistan, Appendix 22. According to Khan, the pedigree of the Muslim aristocracy in Bengal was determined by the 'nearness in point of time and distance in point of land, origin from Bengal to Arabia'.

11. K. McPherson, 'The Muslims of Madras and Calcutta: Agitational Politics in the early 1920s', South Asia, No. 5, December, 1975, 33; A.F.S. Ahmed, 'Muslim Thought and Leadership in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century', Essays in Honour of Prof. S.C. Sarkar, 633, 638.

12. G.E. Von Grunbaum, Medieval Islam: a Study in Cultural Orientation, 199.

13. Ahmed, 636.

14. Karim, 175; The Muslim Microcosm, II.

15. A.C. Roy, History of Bengal: Mughal Period 1576-1765, 464.

Bengal, maintained a social distance¹⁶ from all other ranks of Bengal Muslims whom they rather despised as atraf or ardhal¹⁷ (the ignoble).

There had thus always remained a wide gulf between the immigrant Muslims (or those who claimed such status) and the bulk of the local Muslim community in Bengal. This dichotomy had become so sharply focussed that one Saeed, claiming himself to be a Sharif (aristocrat), in 1880 described the problem of communication arising out of the language barrier as the greatest obstacle affecting the relation between the immigrant and the indigenous Muslims of Bengal. In a book entitled The Future of the Muhammadans of Bengal, Saeed wrote that while the ashraf did not learn Bengali the lower orders of Muslims in Bengal did not know either Persian or Hindusthani; there was thus 'no means of fellow-feeling or acting together'.¹⁸ He added further that 'the knowledge we possess does not reach down to our lower neighbours - our character, ideas, habits and

16. Karim, 197.

17. Ibid., 197; Maulavi A. Wali, 'Ethnographical Notes on the Muhammadan Castes of Bengal', Journal of Anthropological Society of Bombay, VII, No. 4, 1912, 98-113 - 'no Ashraf Muhammadan of India cares what the majority of the Muslims are called'. See also Census of India, 1901, I, I, 544.

18. Calcutta Review, LXXII, 1881, VII.

thoughts do not reflect them. This is the reason that our lower orders are moved and led en masse by men sprung from themselves - men like Titu Meer¹⁹ of Barasat and Dudu Miyan²⁰ of Faridpur'. The ashraf, even after correctly diagnosing the social malaise, took no measures to remedy it; they seemed rather more concerned with the purity of their race which, they said, had degenerated due mainly to inter-marriage²¹ between them and indigenous Muslims.

The atraf were mainly the local converts to Islam from the lower rungs of the society, such as

-
19. Titu Meer or Meer Nisar Ali (1782 - 1831), disciple of the Wahabi leader, Sayyid Ahmed of Rai Bareli, came of a peasant stock. He led a series of uprisings against the exploitation of local zamindars and indigo planters in areas not far from Calcutta. Many poor Muslim peasants and weavers followed his lead. He died during an encounter with British soldiers. A.R. Mallick, British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, 91; Samsad Bangali Charitabhidhan (hereinafter Charitabhidhan), 192.
20. Dudu Miyan or Mohammad Mohsin (1819 - 1860), son of Haji Shariatullah, the leader of the Faraidi movement aimed at the restoration of Islamic practices as they existed in the days of Islam's Prophet, was a man of humble origin. Dudu Miyan assumed the leadership of this religious movement after his father's death. The movement had then provided a platform for a peasant agitation against the oppressive zamindars, indigo planters and their agents. Confined mainly to Faridpur, the home district of Dudu Miyan, this religious-cum-agrarian movement drew its supporters mostly from the lower classes, such as cultivators, weavers and oil-grinders. M.A. Khan, History of the Faraidi Movement in Bengal, XXXIV-XXXV; Charitabhidhan, 205-206.
21. Calcutta Review, LXXII, 1881, VII.

cultivators, and members of the lower functional groups like weavers, barbers, oil-pressers, small traders and artisans.²² Some ashraf were even loath to accept the atraf as true Muslims, except for political and other practical considerations.²³ These members of the ashraf class, to reinforce their claim to leadership on the basis of a distinct Muslim communal identity, sought to minimise the cultural barriers between the ashraf and ~~the~~ atraf by putting forward late in the nineteenth century a theory that all the Muslims of the province were of foreign stock. Khondkar Fuzli Rubbee, an ashraf and a popular Arabic scholar, propounded this theory in his book, The Origins of the Mussalmans of Bengal, first published in 1895.²⁴ A.K. Ghuznavi, who claimed Afghan ancestry for himself and who had become a government minister and a member of the Governor's executive council in the 1920s, generally supported this view. Ghuznavi had, however, suggested that about twenty per cent of the Bengali

22. Karim, 192-195; Levy, 104.

Not all local converts to Islam were relegated to the atraf position. Conversion from the higher orders of the Hindu community occupied relatively a higher position in the Muslim social hierarchy in Bengal and retained their Hindu surnames. See Karim, 197.

23. Wali, 113.

24. The Society for Pakistan Studies, Dacca brought out a new edition of this book in 1970.

Muslims at the beginning of the present century were direct descendents of the foreign settlers, about fifty per cent of them were of mixed descent and about thirty per cent of them were local converts.²⁵ Most scholars are, however, inclined to take the view that the bulk of the Bengali Muslims were converts from the local Hindu and Buddhist population.²⁶

The ashraf, claiming themselves to be the natural leaders of their community, held their sway till the beginning of the twentieth century. An incipient Muslim middle class, composed of small landholders, government servants, professional men and merchants, had, however, meanwhile interposed itself²⁷ between the ashraf and the atraf. The Muslim middle class was drawn principally from the ranks of the rural ashraf represented by petty landholders like talukdars and jotedars, many claiming either purely foreign or mixed descent.²⁸ An upward mobility in the

25. Abu A. Ghuznavi, 'Notes on the Origin, Social and Religious Divisions and other matters touching the Mahomedans of Bengal and having special reference to the District of Maimensingh', Risley Collection, MSS. Eur.E.295, 17., Chapter I, 18.

26. P. Hardy, The Muslims of British India, 10; M. Mujeeb, The Indian Muslims, 21-25; H.G. Rawlinson, India: a Short Cultural History, 206; I.H. Qureshi, The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947), 13-19, 40-50, 53-59, 74-78.

27. Karim, 205.

28. Ibid., 197.

Muslim society, however much the orthodox ashraf might have disliked it, was not uncommon. Time, prosperity and the adoption of ashraf values enabled more ambitious individuals to move up the social ladder.²⁹ This has been well-reflected in numerous popular sayings in rural Bengal. One such popular tag said - he first changed from an Ullah (a commoner's name) to an Uddin (a name signifying middle-class status) and then, as fortune still kept smiling on him, he turned into a Choudhury Saheb (a landlord of upper class).³⁰

The members of the Muslim mercantile community, who were concentrated in Calcutta, the principal commercial and industrial centre of the province, formed a very important section of the Bengal Muslims. They comprised principally the non-Bengali speaking immigrants such as the Cutchi Memons, who had migrated from Kathiwar in the eighteenth century and now dominated the hide

29. Ahmed, 639; The Muslim Microcosm, 11.

30. Ahmed, f.n. 32, 661.

The same process of the upward social mobility seemed to be working amongst Muslims elsewhere in India as was suggested in the Persian couplet:

میشیخ بودم سال اول خان شدم سال دیگر
غلام گران ارزان شدم امسال سید می شوم

(Sheikh budam sal-i- awal Khan shudam sal-i- diggar

Ghalla'ah gar arzan shewad imsal saiyad mi shawam),

i.e. in the first year I was a Sheikh; in the next I became a Khan, this year, if the prices of the crops are right, I shall become a Saiyyad.

trade, and the Pathan Leather merchants.³¹

Other Muslim trading groups were the Dawoodi Bohras, the Ismailies; the more familiar names amongst them playing a dominant political role were the Ispahanies, the Adamjees, the Ariffs, the Sallehjis and the Shustarys. The upper class Muslims in Calcutta allied with the merchant groups against the Mofussil ashraf for the provincial leadership of the community.³²

The important political role played by the Muslim mercantile community in Calcutta was evident from the fact that the Hindu-Muslim pact of 1923, better known as the Bengal Pact, was concluded at the Calcutta home of Khuda Buksh, a Punjabi merchant.³³ The Proja Party, which had come into existence in 1929, was, on the other hand, formally inaugurated at the Central Calcutta home of Abdur Raheem, a Delhi-born merchant,³⁴ who had earlier in 1916 succeeded G.H.C. Ariff, a Gujarati Muslim merchant, as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council from Bengal. Abdur Raheem had also become an MLC from Calcutta in 1929.

31. Siddiqui, 19. There were also smaller but important groups of Muslim merchants and traders at Dacca and Chittagong of course. For the latter see for example S. Osmany's 'Chittagong Port: A Study of Its Fortunes, 1892-1912' (London University Ph.D. thesis, 1978)

32. The Muslim Microcosm, 11.

33. Ibid., 76.

34. Statesman, 2 July and 5 July, 1929.

In Calcutta, the majority of Muslims, numbering about a quarter of a million³⁵ in 1921, were non-Bengali-speaking migrants from Bihar, U.P., the Punjab and North West Frontier Province. They comprised industrial workers, petty merchants and artisans as well as mercantile and industrial magnates.³⁶ The Bengali workforce was to be found only as laskars at the Khidderpore docks or as operatives in jute mills to the south of Calcutta. Overall one-third of the city's Muslims were employed in industry, one-sixth in transport, one-seventh in trade, one-eleventh in domestic service and a mere one in twenty in public administration, the professions and the liberal arts.³⁷

The migrant Muslim workforce in the city, like its Hindu counterpart, was socially isolated with their family and social ties rooted firmly in their distant native villages. They never

35. There were approximately 205,000 Muslims living in Calcutta which had a total population of about 900,000 in 1921. Census of India, 1921, V.I., 4, 34. According to the 1931 Census, the number of Muslims in Calcutta was 311,155 or 26% of the total population of the city: Census of India, 1931, V.11, 16. Imperial Table V.

36. The Hindu and Muslim middle classes considered commerce as a demeaning occupation; they regarded physical labour, particularly the tilling of soil, as degrading.

37. Census of India, 1921, V.1., 107, 123,
Ibid., V.II, 36, 104-107.

identified themselves with the metropolis which to them was the city of the lone male; the question of their identification with rural Bengal in such an event did not arise at all. The migrant work force congregated in communal ghettos in more or less clearly demarcated parts of the city, the Muslim labourers living in enclaves around the Municipal Market, Dharmatola Street and the Howrah Bridge. Even in their communal ghettos, these labourers were subdivided into still smaller groups on the basis of the language they spoke, their places of origin and occupation; their loyalties were principally to their native villages and to the labour contractors or the sardars who had recruited them.³⁸ These factors had thus inhibited the growth of class consciousness, supra-communal identity and political articulation amongst them. Muslim mercantile groups like the Cutchi Memons and the Pathan leather merchants similarly lived within their own small and tightly-knit communities near the famous Nakhoda Mosque in Burra Bazar, separated though not far off from the Marwari merchant community.

The more prosperous and westernised members of the Muslim community, on the other hand, lived in the growing housing colony at Park Circus

38. Royal Commission on Labour in India, Report, 1929, V.I., 6.

secluded from the Muslim migrant labourers and the Muslim mercantile groups as also away from the Hindu middle class modern suburb of Bhowanipur.³⁹ The Muslim middle class leadership in the city in the 1920s and the 1930s thus worked from a very narrow and fragile political base.

Outside Calcutta Muslims were most numerous in the eastern and the northern districts of the province where they formed a fairly solid bloc - over sixty per cent of the population of the area;⁴⁰ Hindus, on the other hand, formed the majority in the western districts. The urban population even in the eastern and the northern districts, as everywhere in the province, was predominantly Hindu,⁴¹ a feature which reflected

39. For the distribution of Muslim population in Calcutta, see Siddiqui, 16-27.

40. Census of India, 1931, V.I., 388. The highest concentration of Muslims in Bengal was in Chittagong and Dacca divisions - 73.7% and 71% respectively. In Rajshahi division, they formed 62% of the population; in the Presidency and Burdwan divisions they comprised 47% and 14% of the population respectively.

41. In the whole of Bengal 2,541,062 Hindus, or 11.5% of them lived in towns compared to 1,029,374 or 3.7% of the Muslims. The total urban population in Bengal in 1931 was 3,684,330 of which about 114,000 were Christians, Buddhist and other religionists. Census of India, 1931, V.I., 82; Ibid., 1931, V.II., 16. Imperial Table V.

It is, however, interesting to note that Muslims tended to congregate in larger proportions in towns in the districts where they were a minority than in the districts where they formed a majority. While in the Burdwan and Presidency division 12% and 11% respectively of the total Muslim population lived in towns, in Dacca and Chittagong divisions only 2% and 1.5% respectively did so. Difficulties in obtaining good agricultural tenancies in the arid and Hindu peasant dominated western Bengal probably counted largely for this pattern. Ibid., 1931, V.I., 82, 388

the economic superiority of the Hindu middle class to its Muslim counterpart, and the monopoly of literary callings, professions and government services by the members of the former. The Muslim middle class, compared to the Hindu middle class, was of recent growth, and so still a small and disorganised body. The members of the latter, dominating as landlords, moneylenders, doctors, lawyers, teachers and government servants, exercised a greater social authority and influence⁴² than the members of the Muslim middle class both in rural and urban Bengal.

It was only in the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century that the new Muslim middle class had begun to assert itself for the leadership of the community. Till then the leadership of the community remained unchallenged in the hands of the socially and politically conservative members of the ashraf in Calcutta and from the Mofussil. A series of events both in India and outside it between 1911 and 1924 built up radical Muslim sentiments in Bengal both against the British and the traditional Muslim leadership.⁴³ The annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911 was a rude shock and bitter

42. Simon Commission, I, 61; Census of India, 1911, V.1., 551.

43. W.C. Smith, Modern Islam in India, 171.

disappointment⁴⁴ for the Muslims of Bengal, particularly for the younger, Western educated Muslims who regarded the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, created in 1905, as an ideal situation for making up the ground they had lost to Hindus in the fields of education, employment and politics. The younger western educated Muslim elite, unimpressed by the loyalist stance of the traditional aristocratic leadership and its strategy of discreet persuasion of the British for concession even after the revocation of the partition of Bengal, adopted an attitude of independence towards the former, talked loudly of emulating the patterns of successful Hindu agitation and even of communal rapprochement with the Hindus against the British.⁴⁵

On the other hand the Turko-Italian war and the Balkan wars coming hard on the heels of the Bengal Muslim resentment against the annulment of the partition and threatening the piecemeal disintegration of the Ottoman Empire at the hands of European nations had roused strong anti-British and Pan-Islamic sentiments particularly among the middle class non-Bengali speaking Muslims of

44. For reaction of the educated Bengali Muslims against the annulment of partition see M. Rahman, From Consultation to Confrontation, 237-57.

45. McPherson, South Asia, No. 5, December, 1975, 37; Rahman, 238, 242, 245, 249.

Calcutta.⁴⁶ This had resulted in the rapid growth of a radical Muslim press in Calcutta.

Meanwhile at the all India level there had also been a shift in the stand of the Muslim League, the first broad-based political organization of the Indian Muslims formed in 1906. At its Lucknow Session in December, 1912, the League, although still professing loyalty to the British Crown, decided upon a policy of Muslim 'friendship and union' with other Indian communities for the attainment of self-government, its newly-defined political goal, through constitutional means.⁴⁷ In the meantime⁴⁸ younger and politically more radical leaders had infiltrated the Bengal Presidency Muslim League, the hold on which of the elder and conservative Muslim leaders had considerably weakened after the death in 1915 of Nawab Salimullah⁴⁸ of Dacca, the main

46. McPherson, South Asia, No. 5, December, 1975, 37; Rahman, 226-29.

47. Rahman, 272-74.

48. Khawaja Salimullah's (1871-1915) forefathers had come from Kashmir as hide-traders and gradually come to own the largest Zamindari estate in eastern Bengal. Salimullah succeeded his father as the head of the family in 1901. Prior to that he held the office of a deputy Magistrate for a few years, and in 1903 he was nominated as a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. He came into the political limelight as a staunch supporter of the creation of the new Eastern Bengal and Assam province in 1905 and thus became the most influential political figure of the time amongst the Bengal Muslims. He was awarded the title of Nawab Bahadur and then a K.C.S.I. in 1903. Later he was decorated with a G.C.I.E. The annulment of partition was an enormous shock to him and he died broken-hearted in 1915. B.L.C.P., XLVII, 19 January, 1915, 5-6.

Bengali architect of the Muslim League. The grip of the younger pro-Congress Muslim leaders on the League apparatus in Bengal strengthened further as the older conservative and loyalist Muslim leaders resigned en masse from their offices in the Bengal Presidency Muslim League following a League-Congress concord, the Lucknow Pact, reached at the all-India level in 1916 between younger Muslim Leaguers and Congress leaders.⁴⁹ The Lucknow Pact, representing a joint League-Congress scheme for future constitutional reforms, approved separate electorates with considerable over-representation for Muslims in provincial legislatures where they were in a minority. In return Hindus in Bengal and the Punjab, the two provinces where they formed a minority, were similarly to have representation far in excess of their numerical strength in the provincial population.⁵⁰ The Lucknow Pact, although apparently a diplomatic victory for the Muslim League in so far as it had secured the Congress' seal of approval for separate electorates, was, nevertheless, a bad bargain and a great disappointment for the Bengal Muslims; for, forming about fifty-three per cent of the province's population, they

49. The Muslim Microcosm, 32.

50. Simon Commission, IV, 138-140.

received under this arrangement only forty per cent.⁵¹ of the seats in the provincial legislature compared to the Punjab Muslims who, forming fifty-five per cent of the population of the province were to receive fifty per cent of the Punjab seats.⁵² A large section of the articulate Muslims in Bengal, particularly the conservative loyalist Muslim leaders, regarded the Lucknow Pact as a sell out of the Bengal Muslims' interests for the sake of reaching a compromise with the Hindus for the protection and enhancement of interests of Muslims elsewhere in India.⁵³

Nawab Ali Choudhuri,⁵⁴ a prominent landlord from

51. Simon Commission, I, 189. J.H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal, 114-15 (Henceforth Broomfield).

52. Simon Commission, I, 189.

53. J.H. Broomfield, 'Four Lives: History as Biography', South Asia, No. I, August, 1971, 79.

54. Sayid Nawab Ali Choudhuri (1863-1929) came of a Zamindar family from Dhanbari in Mymensingh (now in Tangail) district. Educated at Rajshahi Collegiate School and St. Xavier's College, Calcutta, he joined politics as the right hand man of Nawab Salimullah of Dacca. He was a member of the Simla Deputation which waited on the Viceroy in 1906 claiming 'weightage' and separate electorate for the Indian Muslims. From 1906 to 1925 he held a seat either in the Eastern Bengal and Assam Legislative Council, in the Bengal or in the Imperial Legislative Council. He was a government Minister in Bengal in the first Legislative Council under the 1919 Act and also briefly in 1925 when he became a member of the Governor's Executive Council, an office he held till his death. He was decorated with a C.I.E. in 1918 and with a Nawab Bahadurship in 1924. Statesman, 18 April, 1925.

east Bengal, resigned from the office of the President of the Bengal Presidency Muslim League in protest against the pact and with the support of conservative wealthy merchants of the city he revived the moribund Central National Mahommedan Association as a rival organization to the Presidency League.⁵⁵ Numerous other organizations were also formed, all of which were, however, very short-lived.

At another level, the Pan-Islamist agitators, drawn mainly from the middle range of the non-Bengali speaking Muslim society in Calcutta, had stepped up their anti-British campaign in support of preservation of the Ottoman Empire after its dismemberment into mandated states under the Treaty of Sevres following Turkey's defeat in the hands of Britain and her allies in World War I. To the Pan-Islamists the Ottoman Empire was not only the symbol of Islamic temporal power but its ruler, the Sultan, was also the Khalif or the spiritual head of the Sunni Islamic world. Although the Khilafat agitation had become quite formidable between 1919 and 1922 when Gandhi, the new leader of the Indian National Congress, had taken up the joint leadership of the Khilafat and the Congress-led Non-Cooperation movement, the participation of the Bengali-speaking Muslims, particularly in

55. Broomfield, 125.

the rural areas, in the Khilafat movement was minimal.⁵⁶ The Khilafat movement collapsed, however, with the suspension of the Non-Cooperation movement by Gandhi in 1922. This, in turn, destroyed the Hindu-Muslim rapport reached under the Lucknow Pact and during the combined Khilafat-Non-Cooperation movement, and it left the two communities in an atmosphere of increasing tension.⁵⁷ The Khilafat movement had finally become moribund after the abolition of Khilafat in 1923 by Kemal Ataturk, the new Turkish leader. The Bengal Khilafat Committee had, meanwhile, broken down into a multitude of fighting factions, especially after Abul Kalam Azad,⁵⁸ the principal leader of the movement in

56. McPherson, South Asia, No. 5, December, 1975, 42; Simon Commission, VIII, 98.

57. Khalid B. Sayeed, Pakistan. The Formative Phase 1857-1948, 287.

58. Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958), real name Muhiyuddin Ahmad although originally called Feroz Bakht, was born in Mecca and was of Arab descent from his mother's side. His father, Maulana Khair-ud-din, a popular theologian, was a descendent of a family of famous Islamic scholars from Delhi; he spent much of his life in Mecca as an ardent supporter of the Wahabi movement. In his old age Khair-ud-din settled in Calcutta at the invitation of the Orthodox and wealthy Cutchi Memon community who had initially financed the Al-Hilal, an Urdu daily brought out in Calcutta by Azad during the Balkan wars. Azad had no formal education at any school or Madrassah though he had received a strict religious education at home. Yet he came to earn a reputation as a scholar through his writings on literature and religion. In his early youth he even became associated with the Hindu revolutionaries of Bengal. A stalwart of the Indian National Congress, he became the Education Minister of India after independence and died in office. D.N.B.I. 245 A.K. Azad, India Wins Freedom.

Calcutta, had moved into the sphere of Congress' national politics, and had taken up his residence in Delhi.

With the Khilafatists so disintegrated and the traditional conservative-loyalist leadership pushed on to the sidelines by the events between 1911 and 1923, the centre stage of the Muslim politics in Bengal was now occupied by the western educated and professional Muslim elite. All was, however, not well with them too. Far from presenting a united front, they were divided into at least three main rival factions, although the leaders came from the social and cultural background which was not very different from that of the traditional conservative leadership. The divisions among the Muslim elite were mainly the outcome of their leaders' personal ambitions and rivalries, differences in the degree of their alienation from the British and in their political strategies.

One of these rival Muslim elite groups was led by A.K. Fazlul Huq⁵⁹ (1873-1962) who had entered provincial politics as a protege of Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, the doyen of the Muslim aristocracy in east Bengal. Son of a government

59. For biographical details see D.N.B.II, 135-38; Charitabhidhan, 316-17; 'Obituary Notice', The Times (London), 18 April, 1962; 'Sher-e-Bangla Supplement', Pakistan Observer, 27 April, 1967; A.S.M. Rab, A.K. Fazl-ul-Huq.

lawyer at the district town of Barisal, Huq was born in a prosperous landowning and a minor ashraf family from Bakerganj district in east Bengal. A brilliant student of the elite Presidency College, Calcutta, he graduated in 1894 with triple honours in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics, and took his M.A. degree in Mathematics in 1895. After obtaining his Bachelor of Law degree in 1897 Huq returned to his home district to teach in a college, but was soon to switch over to law practice at the Barisal district law court. Simultaneously he entered municipal and district board politics having ^{been} elected a member of the Barisal Municipality and the Bakerganj District Board. He had his early apprenticeship in politics as Nawab Salimullah's emissary to various Muslim leaders of northern India prior to the formation of the Muslim League in 1906. On the Nawab's recommendation the same year Huq was appointed a Deputy Magistrate in the Provincial Executive Service; and he soon rose to the position of Deputy Registrar of Rural Cooperative Societies in the Eastern Bengal and Assam province. He, however, resigned from government service, supposedly on the Nawab's advice,⁶⁰ after the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911 to join

60. 'Sher-e-Bangla Supplement', Pakistan Observer, 27 April, 1967.

anti-British politics and the Calcutta High Court Bar. To add to his political credibility Huq was returned in 1913 unopposed to the provincial legislature from the Dacca Muslim constituency with the assistance of Nawab Salimullah. He further consolidated his position by his election in 1915 to the office of Secretary of the Presidency Muslim League, a position he held till 1921. In this capacity he was a signatory to the Lucknow Pact in 1916 of which he was also one of the principal architects. During these years Huq was an active member of both the League and the Congress holding simultaneously in 1918 both the Presidency of the All-India Muslim League and the General Secretaryship of the Indian National Congress.

Huq gave the Muslim leadership a new style and the Muslim politics in the province a new direction by rejecting the political conservatism and the loyalist stance of the traditional leaders, and by advocating political cooperation between Hindus and Muslims. Unlike the older Muslim leaders he relied for his leadership more on his personal abilities and charisma than merely on the local influence based on landownership and family patronage. Calcutta thus all along remained the main centre of his activity while Barisal, his home town, provided him with a safe base of popular support.

Another group of articulate young Muslims

comprised a small tightly-knit coterie of Calcutta journalists and professional men actively engaged in Congress politics, advocating the cause of Swaraj and supporting the Lucknow Pact of 1916, although lacking a secure political base either in the city or in the country. This group was led by Abul Kasem,⁶¹ a young lawyer and aymadar (petty landholder) from Burdwan district, and his cousin, Mujibur Rahman,⁶² a law graduate and the editor of The Mussalman, an English-language weekly newspaper published from Calcutta. Another prominent member of this group was Akram

61. Abul Kasem (1872?-1936) was born in an aristocratic Muslim family from Burdwan district. After his graduation he worked as a private secretary to his uncle, Nawab Abdul Jabbar, the Prime Minister of Bhopal from 1897 to 1902. Kasem entered public life as a Congress agitator against the partition of Bengal (1905) under Surendranath Banerjea's leadership. Till 1921 he was active in Congress politics; he was also actively connected with the Khilafat movement and the Muslim League politics. He was a member of the Bengali Legislative Council both under the 1909 and 1919 Constitutions. Kasem was the founder-editor of The Mussalman. Charitabhidhan, 43.

62. Mujibur Rahman was the manager of weekly The Mussalman when it was first launched in 1906 soon taking over the editorial responsibilities from his cousin, Abul Kasem. Early in 1925, The Mussalman was turned into a tri-weekly paper; and in 1932 it became a daily newspaper. Besides The Mussalman, he had also brought out a Bengali-language the Khadem in 1926 which, however, did not survive long.

Khan,⁶³ editor of the Mohammadi, a weekly Bengali-language news magazine.

There was still another group of young Muslim politicians vying for the leadership in Calcutta. This was led by Abdullah Al-Mamun Suhrawardy,⁶⁴ a

63. Maulana Mohammad Akram Khan (1868-1968) was born in an orthodox Muslim family in the 24 Parganas district, although his ancestors were Hindu Brahmins. He was educated at the Alia Madrassah, Calcutta. He was a founder member of the Muslim League although he had begun his political career as a Congress activist in the anti-partition agitation and played a prominent role in the Khilafat and the Non-cooperation movements in Bengal. He, however, left the Congress in 1929 in dissent against the Congress scheme of reforms contained in the Nehru Report, 1928. He later became actively engaged in Muslim League politics and held the office of the President of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League from 1941 to 1951. Besides the weekly Mohammadi, he was also the founder and editor of the Masik (monthly), Mohammadi, a literary journal, and the Zamana, an Urdu-language weekly and the Sebak, a daily Bengali newspaper. In 1936 he brought out the Azad, a daily Bengali-language newspaper. Charita-bhidhan, 33; A.K. Shamsuddin, Atit Diner Smriti, passim.

64. Abdullah Al-Mamun Suhrawardy, Ph.D., LL.D. (1887-1935) came of a respectable Muslim family of Midnapur, claiming Persian descent. His father, Obeidullah Al-Obeidi, was a small zamindar and a teacher of the Dacca Government Madrassah. After his early education at the Dacca Madrassah and the Dacca College, Abdullah Suhrawardy went to the University College and the King's College, London and earned his Ph.D. degree. Simultaneously he was called to the Bar from Gray's Inn. He also visited Constantinople and Cairo on study programmes. While in England, he formed there in 1905 a Pan-Islamic Society and started a mosque movement in London. Back in Calcutta, he took the leading part in forming the Indian Red Crescent Society in 1911 for raising funds for Turkey in her war against Italy and for the relief of her war victims. In recognition of his Pan-Islamic activities he received an 'Order' of honour and

barrister and a University Law teacher, enjoying the powerful backing of rich merchants like Ghulam Hussain Ariff, a silk magnate of the city. Aga Moid-ul-Islam, an exiled political dissident from Persia, the founder and editor of the Namal Muqaddas Hablul Matin, a Persian-language news-weekly started in Calcutta in 1912, also stood firmly behind this group. Suhrawardy had become the editor of the short-lived English edition of the Hablul Matin.⁶⁵ Mainly preoccupied with Pan-Islamic activities, the influence of this group did not, however, extend beyond their non-Bengali co-religionists of the city and its suburbs.

For all their political radicalism the majority of these younger Muslim leaders had, however, no real appetite for agitational politics;

the title of 'Iftikhar-ul-Millat' from the Ottoman Khalifa, held a seat in the Bengal Legislative Council from 1910 to 1926 and in the Indian Legislative Assembly from 1926 to 1935. He was also a member of the Central Committee appointed by the Government of India to help the Simon Commission; in this capacity he penned a long and powerful note of dissent to the Committee report in defence of political safeguards for the Indian Muslims. He was the author of a number of works on Muslim Law and Jurisprudence. Star of India, 14 January, 1935; India's Who's Who, 1937-38, 761b.

65. Anisuzzaman, Muslim Bamlar Samayik Patra (contemporary Journals of Muslim Bengal), 135.

on the contrary they were well-disposed to the safe course of constitutional and elitist politics. Fazlul Huq, Abul Kasem and Abdullah-al-Mamun Suhrawardy had grown apprehensive of the direction the joint Khilafat-Non-Cooperation movement was taking under Gandhi's leadership. Meanwhile, the passage of the Government of India Act, 1919 transferring large powers to Indian hands convinced them that Muslim interests could best be served by taking advantage of the new reforms which had raised the number of Muslim voters in the legislative council elections from just over six thousand⁶⁶ under the 1909 Act to 465,000.⁶⁷ Huq, Kasem⁶⁸ and Suhrawardy⁶⁹ had thus dropped out of the anti-British agitation in favour of legislative politics which, they believed, could mend the social imbalances in a more orderly way than anything else.

66. Report of the Franchise Committee, 1919, 38.

67. Return Showing the Results of Elections in India, PP, 1920, XXXV, 1921, Cmd. 1261, 11-12.

68. The defection of Fazlul Huq and Abul Kasem from the Khilafat-cum-Non-cooperation movement came too late for participation in the first election under the 1919 reforms.

69. Abdullah Mamun Suhrawardy who had all along kept a low profile in the movement quietly disentangled himself from the movement in good time for the election held late in 1920. Four members of the Suhrawardhy family became members of the Bengal Legislative Council in 1920 - Abdullah Mamun Suhrawardy, his brother Hasan Suhrawardy, their cousin Zahid R. Suhrawardy and Zahid's son, Hussain Shahid Suhrawardy.

Their strategy was not very different from that of the extremist Hindu elite of Bengal, the unwilling partners with limited responsibility in the Non-Cooperation movement. Following the collapse of the movement they too, under C.R. Das' leadership, opted for council entry in 1923 although with the avowed policy of wrecking the reforms from inside the legislature.

The pro-council Congress faction, fighting the council elections in 1923 under the banner of the newly-founded Swarajya party, had emerged as the largest single group in the Bengal Legislative Council with their captain C.R. Das, leading a compact team of forty-seven, including twenty-one Muslims, in the House.⁷⁰ This team was, to a large extent, the result of a communal accord, called the Bengal Pact,⁷¹ which Das had reached late in 1923 with certain Calcutta Muslim leaders.⁷² The Pact assured the Muslims of a number of major concessions on the attainment of

70. Simon Commission, VIII, 103, 109, 155.

71. A. Karim, Letters on the Hindu-Muslim Pact, 2-3.

72. Abul Kalam Azad, the President of the Indian National Congress in 1923, and Wahed Hussain, an ex-lawyer and MLC for Barrackpore Municipal Muhammadan constituency represented the Urdu Muslims, and Syed Nasim Ali, MLC for 24-Parganas Rural Mohammadan constituency, and Moulvi Abdul Karim, prominent educationist from Sylhet and a former member of the Council of State, ^{represented} the Bengali Muslims in the negotiations of the Pact.

Swaraj in return for their support of the Swarajist strategy of wrecking the reforms of 1919. The Pact had promised the Bengal Muslims ~~se~~parate electorates, representation on all elective bodies including the legislature, as also a share of jobs in government departments and in municipal and local bodies on the basis of population.⁷³ Furthermore the Pact had placed a voluntary ban on the playing by Hindus of music before mosques, at the same time assuring the Muslims of non-interference with their cow-slaughtering at the time of the Korbani (sacrifice) festival.⁷⁴ While the readjustment of the distribution of government jobs was clearly beyond the Swarajists' power and was intended to come into force only on the attainment of Swaraj, the Swarajists kept their part of the bargain with regard to the distribution of patronage in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. Early in 1924 the Swarajists, having won the majority seats including ten of the fifteen Muslim seats in the Calcutta corporation elections, rewarded the Muslims by electing Akram Khan, a newspaper man, and Syed Muhammad Karim Aga, a wealthy Persian merchant as two of the five Aldermen. As a further

73. Simon Commission, VIII, 103; D.K. Chatterjee, C.R. Das and the Indian National Movement, 130-131.

74. D.K. Chatterjee, 131.

gesture two Muslims, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy⁷⁵ and Haji Abdur Raschid Khan, were given the posts of Deputy Mayor and Deputy Executive Officer of the Corporation respectively; to Raschid Khan had also gone the Secretaryship of the Council Swarajya party. In filling the vacancies of

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75. H.S. Suhrawardy (1893-1963) came of a distinguished Muslim family of Midnapur claiming Persian origin. His father Sir Z.R. Suhrawardy, a leading lawyer of the Calcutta High Court Bar, was elevated to the High Court Bench in 1921 and was later to become the Chief Justice of Bengal. Sir Abdur Rahim, ex-Chief Justice of Madras High Court, who had resigned his post to become a member of the Executive Council in Bengal, was his father-in-law. H.S. Suhrawardy was educated at the Calcutta Madrassah and at St. Xavier's College, Calcutta from where he passed his B.Sc. examination. He then obtained his B.Sc. and M.A. degrees in Economics from Oxford University from where he also passed the B.C.L. examination with honours. He was called to the Bar from Gray's Inn to start his law practice at the Calcutta High Court. He held a seat in the Bengal Legislative Council from 1912 to 1936. He was also connected with Calcutta Labour politics; from 1937 to 1945 he was the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League in which capacity he reorganised the League at the district level. Between 1937 and 1943 he was a government minister holding various portfolios finally becoming the Chief Minister of the Province in 1945. He was the founder of the Awami Muslim League (later rechristened the Awami League) as an opposition party to the Pakistan Muslim League. In 1954 he became the Law Minister and in 1956 the Prime Minister of Pakistan holding the latter position for just over a year. Charitabhidhan, 612; Who's Who in India, 1938, 761; DNB, IV, 275-76.

clerical and other posts in the Corporation, the Swarajists recruited more Muslims than ever before - in the first instalment of appointments after their taking office they appointed twenty-five Muslims as against eight Hindus.⁷⁶ This was in keeping with the Pact's provision that Muslims might supply as many as eighty per cent of all recruits till they had occupied fifty-five per cent of the total posts.⁷⁷

The communal honeymoon was, however, short-lived. The Bengal Pact was rejected by the All-India Congress, and the Hindu anti-Swarajist platforms and press in Bengal raised their strong voices against the Pact which they said was the 'same thing as cow-killing'.⁷⁸ The communal tension between the Hindus and the Muslims^{was} further exacerbated by the Hindu Suddhi (purification by reconversion from Islam) and Sangathan (solidarity) movements and the countering Muslim Tabligh (preaching) and Tanzeem (solidarity) movements. The communal dissensions were further heightened by the question of the unauthorised burial of a Muslim Pir (holy man) in the Calcutta Municipal market and the Hindu demand for the exhumation and

76. Muslim Microcosm, 81.

77. Chatterjee, 131; Sayeed, 67.

78. Azizul Huque, A Plea for Separate Electorates in Bengal, 7.

removal of the body from the site. Meanwhile the death of C.R. Das in 1925 and acute factionalism in the Congress camp in the struggle for leadership left no strong and capable Hindu leader convincingly to uphold the cause of the Pact and communal harmony. The Muslim leaders, whether pro-Swarajist or not, had, on the other hand, become sceptical of the Pact.⁷⁹ Finally, the savage inter-communal riots in Calcutta in 1926 completed the rift between Hindus and Muslims, and the anti-Pactist Hindus rescinded the Pact at the Provincial Congress Conference at Krishnanagar in May 1926.⁸⁰

The elections to the Bengal Legislative Council in 1926 thus brought a shift in political alignment on communal lines: of thirty-nine Muslim MLCs all but one were returned on the pledge of working the reforms, and only one⁸¹

79. A.K. Azad. India Wins Freedom, 21.

80. I.Q.R. 1926, I, 417-421.

81. Simon Commission, VIII, 110, 161; B.A.R., 125-26, XIX; A.K. Ghuznavi, Simon Commission XVI, II, 186.

The Swarajist candidate, Abdur Razzack, a Corporation Councillor, contesting two Muslim constituencies in Calcutta against Sir Abdur Rahim and H.S. Suhrawardy respectively, secured only 5 votes altogether - 3 in one and 2 in the other. Rahim and Suhrawardy between them polled 1369 votes - the former securing 641 of 648 votes polled and the latter 728 of 912 votes polled.

on the Swarajya party ticket. In many constituencies Muslim candidates who had either identified themselves with the Swarajya party in the previous council or had contested elections on the Congress party ticket were defeated by comparatively unknown opponents.⁸² There was, however, still no unity of leadership among the Muslims; and the thirty-seven or thirty-eight non-Swarajist Muslim MLCs were divided into at least three parties⁸³ - the Bengal Muslim Party under the leadership of Sir Abdur Rahim,⁸⁴ the Central Moslem Council

82. Simon Commission, VIII, 110. The turn out of Muslim male voters at the polls in 1926 had increased to 39.7% from 37.5% in 1923. See B.A.R., 1925-26, XVII-XIX; Return Showing the Results of Elections in India, 1925 and 1926, 1927, Cmd. 2923, 4.

83. 'Political Notes', Statesman, 16 February, 1927; Simon Commission, VIII, 110.

84. Sir Abdur Rahim (1867-1952), born in an aristocratic zamindar family of Midnapur, passed his M.A. examination in English from the Calcutta Presidency College, standing first amongst the successful candidates. He was called to the Bar in 1890 from the Middle Temple, and he practised law at the Calcutta High Court. After serving as the Deputy Legal Remembrancer of the Bengal Government for over a year, he held the office of Presidency Magistrate, Calcutta from 1900 to 1903. He was a member of the Simla Deputation waiting on the Viceroy in 1906. A recognised scholar of Muslim Law, he was appointed the Tagore Professor of Law at Calcutta University in 1907, and his lectures in that capacity, later published under the title of Principles of Muhammadan Jurisprudence according to the Sunni Law, became an authority in this field. In 1908 he was made a judge of the Madras High Court, to rise to the position of Chief Justice of the province in 1920 when he resigned from the Bench to become a member of the Executive Council of the Bengal Government, an office he held till 1925. From 1926 to 1929 he was a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, and from 1930 to 1945 he held

Party led by A.K. Ghuznavi⁸⁵ and the Independent Muslim Party led by H.S. Suhrawardy.

All three of them were highly-educated, England-returned men coming from wealthy and pre-eminent Muslim families of the province. Their social authority, command over English language, easy access to the officialdom helped them to

a seat in the Indian Legislative Assembly, leading the Independents in the house in 1933 and 1934, and becoming the President of the Assembly in 1935 and holding this office till 1945. From 1929 to 1935 he had also held the office of the President of the Nikhil Banga Proja Samiti (All-Bengal Tenants' Association). He was knighted in 1919, and later in 1925 decorated with a K.C.S.I. D.N.B.I, 10-11
Who's Who in India, Burma and Ceylon, 1948, 203

85. Abdel Kerim Abu Ahmed Khan Ghuznavi (1872-1939) came of a zamindar family of Tangail claiming Afghan ancestry as a direct descendant of Osman Khan Ghuznin Lohani, the last independent chieftain of Bengal. Educated at St. Peter's, Exmouth, Devonshire and at Oxford and Jena (Munich) Universities, he unsuccessfully took the I.C.S. Examination in 1890. From 1906 to 1916 he was a member of the Imperial Legislative Council. He travelled extensively in Europe and the Middle East; in 1913 at the instance of the Viceroy, he visited the Hedjaz, Palestine and Syria to enquire into the pilgrim-traffic to these holy places of Islam from India. Holding a seat in the Bengal Legislative Council from 1924 to 1929, he was twice appointed a government minister, in 1924 and 1927. From 1929 to 1934 he was a member of the Executive Council of the Bengal Government. He was also the Chairman of the Bengal Provincial Committee of MLCs assisting the Simon Commission. He was knighted in 1929 and given the title of Nawab Bahadur in 1933. Who's Who in India, Burma and Ceylon, 1940-41, 144-45. Statesman, 27 January, 1927; Star of India, 7 December, 1933.

assert themselves in their community. Rahim's public image was built primarily upon his reputation as a former High Court judge, a scholar of Muslim Law and Jurisprudence, and an ex-member of the Governor's Executive Council. His association with the Bengal Provincial Tanzeem Committee⁸⁶ in 1926 had, on the other hand, endeared him to the Urdu-speaking petty merchants and artisans of Calcutta, who formed the bulk of his constituents in North Calcutta. Ghuznavi, on the other hand, coming from an influential zamindar family with a long rent-roll and the services of his estate machinery had a built-in advantage over his opponents in his own constituency. At the district level he wielded quite an influence as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Mymensingh District Anjuman-e-Islamia.⁸⁷ In the metropolis he led the Central National Mahommedan Association, the oldest Muslim political organization in Bengal, and the Anjuman-e-Waezan-e-Bangala,⁸⁸ a Muslim religio-cultural organization, the latter publishing its own organ, the Moslem Hitaishi, a weekly Bengali-language news-journal. Additionally, Ghuznavi, for his personal publicity, could safely count upon the Hanafi, a Calcutta-based weekly

86. Bengal Provincial Tanzeem Committee, Aims and Objects, 1-2.

87. A.M. Ahmed, Amar Dekha Rajnitir Panchash Bachhar, 55.

88. Anisuzzaman, 33.

Bengali-language news-magazine, of which he was a financier. H.S. Suhrawardy, too, came from a highly enlightened⁸⁹ and affluent family which, itself committed to Urdu language and culture, exercised considerable influence on the Urdu-speaking Muslim community of Calcutta - both on the wealthy mercantile class and on the petty shopkeepers and the artisan classes; the Suhrawardy family had particularly earned the respect and gratitude of the last two classes by its paternalistic interest⁹⁰ in them. H.S. Suhrawardy, an Oxford graduate and Barrister, held the ear of the Muslim elite and the petty bourgeoisie alike by his assertive role as the Deputy Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation (1924 - 1926) and by the protection of his co-religionists in the city during the savage inter-communal riots of 1926.

Rahim's Bengal Muslim party, formed early in 1926, went to the poll pledging itself to work the reforms; its political objects, inter alia, included securing a constitution for India framed on the basis of a federation of autonomous provinces, with the central government controlling only such subjects as defence and the armed forces, foreign and inter-provincial relations, currency,

89. H.S. Suhrawardy's father and two uncles were educated in England and all three were knighted in course of time.

90. Begum Ikramullah, passim.

trade and communication.⁹¹ The Central Moslem Council Party, the Council wing of the Central National Mahommedan Association, was formed just before the election late in 1926 with a similar programme.⁹² The Independent Muslim Party, although apparently anti-government in attitude, professed the same political beliefs as the other two.⁹³

The shifting allegiance of the Muslim MLCs to the leaders and the latter's conflicting claims⁹⁴ of their strength in the House make very difficult an accurate estimate of the size of the various Muslim groups in the legislature. However, according to an official estimate⁹⁵ made just after the polls in 1926, sixteen MLCs belonged to the Bengal Muslim party, eight to the Independent Muslim

91. I.Q.R., 1926, I, 65-67; Ibid., II, 95-98; also see Sir Abdur Rahim's manifestoes, Statesman, 7 September, 1926.

92. For Central Moslem Council Party's programme see A.K. Ghuznavi, Simon Commission, XVI, II, 198.

93. B.A.R., 1925-26, XIV.

94. A.K. Ghuznavi, Simon Commission, XVI, II, 193. Ghuznavi claimed that in 1927 he led a group of 24 MLCs (a highly exaggerated claim), Sir Abdur Rahim led another group of 8 or 9 (rather an underestimate). Besides them there were 6 or 7 freelances, one owing his loyalty to the Swarajist party

95. B.A.R., 1925-26, XIX.

Party while thirteen Muslim MLCs had no definite party affiliation, a majority of whom, however, soon joined the Central Moslem Council Party under Ghuznavi's leadership.

The Muslim MLC's common object of protecting Muslim interests, being without any concrete and unified political programme, proved too weak a bond of unity amongst men whose political response was conditioned more by the consideration of personal interest than anything else.⁹⁶ The personal rivalries and dissensions of the leaders prevented the Muslims in the House from wielding the influence which, otherwise, seemed open to them. This becomes very evident from the bitter feud early in 1927 between Sir Abdur Rahim and A.K. Ghuznavi, the two arch rivals, over the question of ministership. Rahim who, as the leader of the single largest elected group willing to work the reforms, was appointed a government minister early in 1927 to the chagrin of his rival, Ghuznavi, was compelled to resign within days of his assuming office as no Hindu would serve with him because of his vigorous espousal of the Muslim interests on overtly communal lines⁹⁷ during the past few years. This paved the way for A.K. Ghuznavi to form a ministry⁹⁸ with a Hindu

96. Simon Commission, VIII, 110.

97. B.A.R., 1926-27, 8.

98. Statesman, 27 January, 1927.

colleague, Byomkesh Chakravarti, a Barrister and industrialist, bringing into the open, however, the quarrel between Ghuznavi and Rahim.

Rahim resorted to a vitriolic public campaign in Calcutta against Ghuznavi, with his ardent supporters denigrating Ghuznavi on the streets and in public meetings⁹⁹ as a renegade to their community for accepting office with a Hindu after the serious affront to the Muslim community involved in the refusal by Hindus to serve with Rahim.¹⁰⁰ The Hindu Mahasabha record of Ghuznavi's Hindu running-mate had put into his opponents' hands a still more damaging weapon of attack against him. Besides this, a police firing¹⁰¹ early in 1927 on an unruly fanatic Muslim mob in a distant Barisal hamlet gave Rahim further room for manoeuvre. Making the firing an issue he resigned his council seat in April, 1927 only to return triumphantly to the council in May, 1927 armed with a fresh mandate from his constituents for his policies.¹⁰²

99. Statesman, 28 January, 2 and 6 February, 1927.

100. B.A.R., 1926-27, 8.

101. The incident occurred early in March, 1927 when a Hindu procession with music was obstructed by a Muslim mob before a mosque. 14 people were killed on the spot as a result of firing. Statesman, 9 March, 1927.

102. Rahim won the by-election convincingly by securing 573 votes against 175 won by his opponent Y.C. Ariff, a silk merchant of Persian origin, who was backed by the Suhrawardy family. The turn out of electors was low, although it was still 12% higher than in the general election in November, 1926 when only 32% polled. Statesman, 15 May, 1927.

So with added strength he now directed his campaign against the 'Guz-Chakra' ministry as the Swarajist and the anti-Ghuznavi Muslim Press of Calcutta scornfully called the ministry of Ghuznavi and Chakravarti. Rahim entered into a surprisingly unlikely alliance¹⁰³ with Mujibur Rahman, the editor of the Mussalman, A.K. Fazlul Huq, who had held a ministerial post in 1924 and was still aspiring after another one even though he had no following in the council, and the Swara-jists, who, as anti-ministerialists were no less responsible than others for blocking Rahim's attempts to form a ministry. This was, of course, nothing more than an opportunist combination¹⁰⁴ created only for the limited purpose of bringing down the ministry of Ghuznavi and Chakravarti, thus providing a stark example as to how issues and political principles often became hopelessly confused in the province during this period.

The 'Guz-Chakra' ministry finally fell in August, 1927 on a motion of no-confidence moved by Dr B.C. Roy, the deputy leader of the Swarajya Party - the motion against Ghuznavi having been carried by sixty-six to sixty-two votes¹⁰⁵ and

103. 'Political Notes', Statesman, 2 February, 4 May, 1927.

104. Ibid.; B.A.R., 1926-27, 13.

105. B.L.C.P., 1927, XXVI, 258-59.

that against Chakravarti by sixty-eight to fifty-five votes.¹⁰⁶ On both divisions twenty-six Muslim MLCs supported the motion and only ten opposed it.¹⁰⁷ An analysis of the voting pattern of the Muslim MLCs reveals several interesting features. The West Bengal Muslim MLCs voted overwhelmingly for the motion: of all the fourteen Muslim MLCs from this region taking part in the two divisions, twelve voted for the motion on each occasion, and two, H.S. Suhrawardy, Ghuznavi's comrade in arms representing Calcutta South, and Gholam Hossain Shah, Suhrawardy's friend, representing 24-Parganas Municipality, voted against the motion. Of the twenty-two out of the total of twenty-five Muslim MLCs from east Bengal taking part in the divisions, only eight voted against the motion. Of these eight, one, Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, was actually an Executive Councillor; another two - K.G. Farouqui, M.L.C. Tippera North, and Razaur Rahman Khan, M.L.C., Dacca East, were Ghuznavi's sons-in-law. In contrast to the meagre support Ghuznavi could muster in the House, fourteen east Bengal Muslim MLCs, including the Nawab of Dacca, the oldest and the biggest Muslim Zamindar of the province, voted for the motion.

106. B.L.C.P., [1927, XXVI, 258-59. 42 Swarajists among other Hindu members voted for the motion.

107. 10 Muslim and 13 Hindu MLCs, besides the non-official, the official and the European groups voted against the motion. Ibid., 258-59.

Support for the motion also came from three of the four¹⁰⁸ Muslim MLCs from Ghuznavi's own district - Mymensingh. Rahim's campaign against Ghuznavi could not of itself have proved so disastrous for the latter had not Ghuznavi's 'autocratic',¹⁰⁹ temperament and contemptuous¹¹⁰ behaviour with his political colleagues alienated them from him.

A new ministry was then formed in September, 1927 with P.C. Mitter, a Hindu Zamindar and lawyer, and Nawab Musharruf Hosain,¹¹¹ the nominee of Sir

108. The other MLC from Mymensingh was Ghuznavi himself.

109. R.N. Reid, Years of Change in Bengal and Assam, 49.

110. Ibid.

111. Nawab Musharruf Hosain (1871-1966) came from the Tippera district in east Bengal but settled in Jalpaiguri after his marriage with a daughter of Khan Bahadur Rahim Bukhsh, who originally hailed from the Noakhali district and became one of the pioneers of tea industry in Jalpaiguri in the Darjeeling district. A law graduate, Hosain joined the local Bar but was soon to turn to tea-plantation industry. He also held the office of Vice-Chairman of the local municipality for several years; he was also an Honorary Magistrate. From 1923 to 1945 he represented the Jalpaiguri-cum Malda Muslim constituency in the Bengal legislature. He twice became a Minister under the 1935 Act. After independence he became a member of the West Bengal State Assembly. He was granted the title of Nawab in 1926.

Abdur Rahim. In August 1928, however, P.C. Mitter, on his elevation to the office of Executive Councillor, was replaced by Raja Bhupendra Narayan Sinha of Nashipur. Meanwhile Rahim's erstwhile allies Fazlul Huq and Mujibur Rahman in conjunction with the Swarajists had again engaged themselves in ministry-wrecking tactics, while the supporters of Ghuznavi and Chakravarti, the ousted ministers formed themselves into a new group, the United Council Party¹¹² with the aim of avenging their defeat by bringing down the succeeding ministry. Soon afterwards in February, 1929 a motion of no-confidence¹¹³ was passed against Nashipur and Hosain, whereupon the governor prorogued the Council; and in April he called a mid-term election¹¹⁴ to take place in June, 1929. The Bengal Government gave the

112. Statesman, 30 August, 1927. The party was dubbed the 'party of landlords and in-laws' as it was dominated by landholders, and among its members the Maharaja of Mymensingh was the son-in-law of B. Chakravarti, one of the ousted ministers, K.G.M. Farouqui and Razaur Rahman Khan who were the sons-in-law of A.K. Ghuznavi, another ousted minister, and H.S. Suhrawardy who was the son-in-law of Sir Abdur Rahim. Statesman, 18 March, 1928.

113. The motion against the Nawab was carried by 65 to 59 votes, 17 Muslim and 48 Hindu MLCs voting for the motion, that against Nashipur was passed by 62 to 59 votes, 17 Muslim and 45 MLCs voting for the motion. B.L.C.P., 1929, XXI. I., 239.

114. Calcutta Gazette (Extraordinary), 20 April, 1929.

chronic instability of the ministry—resulting not so much from the declared Swarajist wrecking tactics as from the shifting allegiances of the professedly co-operating Muslim MLCs—as the main reason for their action.¹¹⁵ A stable ministry in the province, the Bengal Government held, was possible only if eighteen to twenty Muslim MLC's acted together in its support, a consensus which had been difficult to obtain.¹¹⁶ The Muslim MLC's, despite their election on the pledge to work the constitution and despite *their* holding the balance of the House in their own hands, squandered the opportunity to exercise real power in ^{the} pursuit of personal rivalries.

The failure of the Muslim M. L. C's to act as an organised bloc in the council doubtless mirrored the generally fluid state of the Muslim society and politics in the province at that time. The Muslims had no broad-based political party; their various council parties were mere makeshift alliances based on kinship or other common ties with the sole purpose of securing status and power which they doubtless argued was after all what politics was all about.¹¹⁷ Some of the council members spent 'staggering' amounts

115. G. of B. to G. of I. Home No. 127 P. S. D., 26 April, 1929, P&J File No, 2075 of 1927 L/P&J/6/1893.

116. Ibid.

117. A. K. Ghuznavi, Simon Commission, XVI, II, 187; Returns of election expenses showed variations from 3 annas to Rs. 2300/-, Simon Commission, VIII, 150.

of money in elections with the hope of recouping their election expenses either with a ministership or with tit-bits of ministerial patronage in the form of licences and permits of which a minister in charge, say, of the Excise and Industries department, had quite a few at his disposal to distribute. Similarly a minister in charge of the Local Self-Government department had patronage to distribute in the form of appointments as district board, local board and municipal members and chairmen. Such patronage was often used as leverage¹¹⁸ for securing ministerial support. For instance, Ghuznavi was accused of withholding¹¹⁹ appointments of district board chairmen and Musharruf Hosain of buying off political enemies and rewarding friends with official patronage¹²⁰ to rebut no-confidence motions against them. Ghuznavi confided to Sir Robert N. Reid, a Government Secretary at that time, that he had brought an east Bengal M. L. C. all the way to Calcutta, paying all his expenses, to support Ghuznavi against a no-confidence motion but he was in turn 'bought off'¹²¹ by his enemies for a mere two thousand rupees. Nawab Musharruf

118. Governor of Bengal (Sir Stanley Jackson) to S. of S. 18 October, 1927. Birkenhead Papers. MSS. Eur. D.703, 21. Sir Stanley wrote just after the appointment of P. C. Mitter and Nawab Musharruf Hosain as ministers that both looked 'terrified' and were 'already worrying' how they could satisfy their supporters.

119. B. L. C. P., 1927, XXVI, 240-41; B. A. R. 1926-27, 12.

120. B. L. C. P., 1927, XXVI, 240-41; B. A. R., 1926-27, 12; B. A. R., 1928-29, VIII; B. L. C. P., 1929, XXXI.2., 35, 43.

121. Reid, 52.

Hosain, on the other hand, once told Sir Robert that his ministership had cost him from his private purse alone to the region of one hundred thousand rupees.¹²² The Nawab, then out of office, however, quickly added that this had not been worth it, although soon afterwards he stood at the snap election called in the summer of 1919 after the overthrow of the Nawab-Nashipur ministry early in that year, and he was returned unopposed from his home-constituency of Malda-cum-Jalpaiguri.

The election, coming at short notice, at the hottest time of the year and amidst unfounded speculation of a general election to come at the end of the year, aroused little enthusiasm in the province.¹²³ As many as fifteen¹²⁴ of the thirty-nine Muslim M. L. C's were returned unopposed, and the turn out of the voters was remarkably low-- in case of the Muslim voters only twenty-eight¹²⁵ per cent. of them, compared to thirty-nine¹²⁶ per cent. in 1926, polled their votes. Eighteen of the Muslim M. L. C's in the new council were fresh arrivals, while the most conspicuous drop-out was Sir Abdur Rahim who had retired from

122. Ibid, 52. The first no-confidence motion against the Nawab cost him Rs. 10,000, the second Rs. 20,000, and the third as much as Rs. 50,000.

123. B.A.R. 1928-29, IX.

124. Return showing the Results of Election in India, 1929 and 1930. (P.P. 1930-31, XXIV), 1931, cmd. 3922, 17.

26 Hindu M. L. C's from the Non-Muhammadan constituencies and 4 Hindus from special constituencies were returned unopposed. Ibid, 16-17 and 18.

125. P.P. 1930-31, XXIV, cmd. 3922 (1931), 4. The highest number of votes in the Muhammadan constituencies —40%— were polled at the Calcutta South, and the lowest, 5.8% at the Mymensingh central constituency.

the contest at the last moment on the specious ground that he saw no chance of a united Muslim bloc in the new council.¹²⁷

He later found a seat for himself in the Indian Legislative Assembly thus making his exit from the provincial political scene.

The thirty-nine Muslim M. L. C's were divided at least into three groups with their nominal leaders making conflicting claims of their respective strength. An official, if tentative estimate¹²⁸ of the strength of the various Muslim groups immediately after the election described twelve Muslim M. L. C's as belonging to the Bengal Provincial Muslim League,¹²⁹ which had at that time practically become an adjunct of the Bengal Congress, eleven as belonging to the Muslim Legislators' Association,¹³⁰ and the remaining sixteen as independent. Some of the independents, perhaps, also held Sir Abdur Rahim's Muslim Party tickets, this party having originally fielded some

126. Ibid. The total number of votes polled in all the contested constituencies fell to 26% in 1929 from 39.4% in 1926.

127. Statesman, 10 May, 1929.

128. G. of B. to G. of I. Telegram, 115/29 Public, 18 June, 1929. P&J Register No.2261 of 1929, Vol. No.2052 of 1927, L/P&J/6/1893.

129. Maulvi Abdul Karim of the Bengal Pact fame and one of the Vice-Presidents of the Presidency Muslim League, and Mujibur Rahman, the editor of the Mussalman and the Secretary of the League, conducted the election on behalf of the party. Abdul Karim was elected to the Council from a Burdwan constituency while Rahman did not contest the election at all.

130. The leaders of this party, A.H. Ghuznavi and Abdullah Suhrawardy, however, did not stand in the election.

candidates before it had disintegrated and Rahim had withdrawn from the contest. Ultimately, however, twenty-seven of the Muslim M. L. C's grouped themselves under the Muslim Legislators' Association¹³¹ banned, eight with the Muslim League party, with three still styling themselves as independents while one defected to the Swarajya party.¹³¹

Thirty of the Muslim M. L. C's, however, formed themselves in July, 1929 into the United Muslim Party,¹³² a loose parliamentary alliance of factions of differing political policies and outlooks. The main force behind this coalition was, of course, the common need felt by the articulate section of the Muslims, as indeed by all communities in India, for communal unity and the evaluation of definite plans for the political future of their community, particularly after the re-opening of the whole question of constitutional advance by the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission late in 1927. More important however than this putting together of the United Muslim Party was the formation of the Bengal ^{council} Proja Party¹³³ (Tenants' Party) by a coterie of eighteen M. L. C's within the United Muslim Party with the object of upholding and promoting the interests of the

131. Statesman, 5 July, 1929.

132. Ibid., 2 July, 1929; F.R. July (1) and (2), 1929. Khawaja Habibullah, the Nawab of Dacca was chosen as the leader of the party.

133. Statesman, 2 July, 1929; F.R. July (1), 1929. The Proja Party was formed at the same meeting at which the Muslim United Party was formed on 1 July 1929.

agricultural classes. The Council Proja Party was formally inaugurated on 4 July, 1929¹³⁴ at the home of Abdur Raheem, a Delhi-born merchant of Calcutta and M. L. C., with Fazlul H. q¹³⁵ as its leader and Raheem himself as the deputy leader. Tamizuddin Khan,¹³⁶ an M. L. C. from Faridpur was made its secretary, and Khan Bahadur Azizul Huq¹³⁷ M. L. C., Nadia,

134. Statesman, 5 July, 1929.

135. Fazlul Huq earlier in 1917 had formed the Calcutta Agricultural Association with a group of fellow lawyers. The Association was, however, short-lived. Moslem Hitaishi, 21 December, 1917.

136. Tamizuddin Khan (1889-1963) came from a jotedar family of Faridpur. A student of the Presidency College, he passed the M.A. and the Bachelor of Law examinations of the Calcutta University. He began his career as a lawyer at the Faridpur District Court. He made his political career as a Congressite Non-Cooperator in 1921 and for a while taught at the Congress National College founded in Calcutta during the Non-Cooperation movement. He was for a number of years the Vice-Chairman of the Faridpur Municipality and the Chairman of the Faridpur District Board. In 1923, he entered the Bengal legislature on the Swarajya party ticket but later dissociated himself from the party. He held his seat in the Bengal Legislature from 1923 to 1946 meanwhile turning a Muslim Leaguer. He held a ministerial post in the Bengal Government from 1937 to 1941, and again from 1943 to 1946. After independence he was elected to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in 1947 and to the National Assembly in 1962, holding the office of the President of the former and later that of Speaker of the latter.

137. Muhammad Azizul Huq (1890-1947) came of a middle-range mercantile family of shawl-makers of the Nadia district. A graduate of the Presidency College, he took the Bachelor of Law degree of the Calcutta University to start his law practice at the subdivisional law court of Krishnanagar. He became in turn a Government Pleader (legal counsellor and lawyer for the government), the Vice-Chairman of the Nadia District Board and the Chairman of the Krishnanagar Municipality. He entered the Bengal Legislative Council in 1926 retaining his

and Shah Abdul Hamid,¹³⁸ M. L. C., Mymensingh East, as its joint secretaries.

Soon after the formation of the Council Proja Party, a broad-based provincial (agricultural) tenants' party, the Nikhil Banga Projā Samiti¹³⁹ (All-Bengal Tenants' Association) ~~accommodating~~ Muslim leaders of differing political strands was formed in Calcutta. Sir Abdur Rahim became its President with five Vice-Presidents to his aid—A.K. Fazlul Huq, Dr. Abdullah Suhrawardy, Khan Bahadur Abdul Momin,¹⁴⁰ Abdul Karim and Mujibur Rahman. The secretary of the party, Akram Khan, was similarly flanked by two joint secretaries—Shamsuddin

seat in the Council in the 1929-election. In 1934 he became a government minister holding the office till the end of the tenure of the 1919-Act which ended in 1937. In 1937 he was elected to the Bengal Legislature under the 1935 Act as an independent candidate, soon afterwards joining the Muslim League to become the Speaker of the House. From 1938 to 1942 he was the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University. Between 1942 and 1946 he held the office of High Commissioner for India in London and that of the Member in charge Railways and Commerce in the Governor General's Executive Council. He also served on the Bengal Banking Enquiry Committee (1929-30), the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, 1928 and on the Bengal Land Revenue Commission, 1940. He was the author of several interesting works—History and Problems of Muslim Education in Bengal, Man Behind the Plough, Separate Electorates in Bengal, Education and Retrenchment. He was knighted in 1937 and awarded a C.I. E. in 1942. Charitabhidhan, 34.

138. Shah Abdul Hamid came of a small jotedar family of Mymensingh. In the early 1920's he was the Secretary of the Kishoreganj Proja Sabha and an active member of the Mymensingh District Ryot Association. He was also connected with the Rural Cooperative movement in Mymensingh.

139. A.M. Ahmed, 53.

140. Khan Bahadur Abdul Momin, C.I. E. came from

Ahmed and Tamizuddin Khan.

The formation of Proja Party which marked a shift in the strategy of a group of Muslim politicians seeking a political base in rural Bengal was, doubtless, a turning point in the Muslim politics of the province. Apparently the strategy of its proponents paid off, but there is some danger of overstating its importance and success for the Muslims of the province. Despite the original intention of some of its proponents, such as Shah Abdul Hamid, to organise the party on non-communal lines,¹⁴² the fact remains that both its leadership and following were exclusively Muslim. This obvious communal overtone was largely rooted in the peculiar social structure in Bengal where the zamindars, the rich landlords of other categories and the moneylenders were overwhelmingly caste Hindu, and the peasants and the tenants were predominantly Muslim and low-caste Hindu. There was, however, also a class overtone

Burdwan and was the son of Nawab Abdul Jabbar, an aymadar (landholder) and a colleague of Nawab Abdul Latif in the Muhammadan Literary Society, the oldest provincial Muslim organization. Momin joined the provincial government service, and after holding several high posts such as that of Director of Land Revenue and Under Secretary, Revenue Department, he retired from service as a Divisional Commissioner in 1931. After retirement he entered politics India's Who's Who, 483 b.

141. Shamsuddin Ahmed (1889-1969) came from the Nadia, now Kushtia district. Educated at the Calcutta Presidency College, he began his career as a lawyer practising at the Calcutta High Court. He joined the Congress Party politics during the Khilafat and the Non-Cooperation movement. He held the office of the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee from 1921 to 1925; he had also briefly occupied the position of the Secretary of the Provincial Khilafat

to Bengal society which surfaced at intervals and cut across communal boundaries. For instance, none of the prominent Muslim landholders, such as the Nawab of Dacca, joined the party; A.K. Ghuznavi, a zamindar and an Executive Councillor in 1929, would not even accept an address of felicitations,¹⁴³ from the Mymensingh Proja Party during an official tour of the district, although he gladly received similar addresses from the District Landholders' Association and the local Anjuman-e-Islamia. The opposition of Khawaja Habibullah, the Nawab of Dacca, to the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill, 1928 had also earlier shown how class interests transcended other factors in Bengal: the Nawab, presiding over a conference of East Bengal Landholders who met in Dacca in August, 1928 to express their concern and disapproval of the clauses affecting their interests adversely, strongly criticised the Bill.¹⁴⁴

Committee in 1920. From 1933 to 1936 he was an elected Councillor of the Calcutta Corporation. In 1926 and in 1929 he was elected to the Bengal Legislature on the Congress Party ticket. He was again elected to provincial legislature in 1937 on the ticket of the Krishak-Proja party of which he himself was one of the architects. He became a government minister in 1938, in 1941^{and} then again in 1946. In 1944 he joined the Muslim League. After independence he settled in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and held an ambassadorial appointment.

142. Statesman, 2 July, 1929.

143. A.M. Ahmed, 69.

144. Statesman, 8 August, 1928.

The Proja Party may, perhaps, be thus looked upon as a political platform for a section of the Bengali Muslim middle class from which to attack both the caste Hindu and the traditional Muslim leadership and so to tilt the political balance in the province in their favour. The elite leadership of the party hardly had the aim of creating an egalitarian society in their mind. A social revolution was the last thing they would have wanted: they were not pursuing a new social utopia but were intent upon reaping immediate political benefits of their stance by dislodging the incumbent leadership. Let us, however, not underestimate the difficult task the Proja Party leaders had undertaken: they now needed to conciliate various classes of peasants and tenure holders¹⁴⁵ and even to offer the Muslim landowners a suitable alternative if they were successfully to woo them. The question of rural reform was of little relevance to the Calcutta Muslims and their spokesmen; the latter showing rather superficial interest in the question as a potential political weapon only. Before the appointment of ministers in 1929, Fazlul Huq and other members of the Council Proja Party occasionally dropped hints both in and without the House that on the question of ministerial appointments the strength of their party must be reckoned

145. In the complex system of land tenure under the Permanent Settlement there could in some places, as in Bakerganj be up to twenty intermediaries between the zamindar and the peasant. J.C. Jack, Bakerganj District Gazetteer, 94.

with.¹⁴⁶ When finally three ministers—two Muslims, K.G.M. Faroqui¹⁴⁷ and Khawaja Nazimuddin,¹⁴⁸ and a Hindu Kumar were appointed Shib Shakhareswar Ray, a landlord from Rajshahi, Fazlul Huq

146. B.A.R., 1928-29, IX; Statesman, 7 July and 22 November, 1929; B.L.C.P.

147. Khan Bahadur Kazi Golam Mohiuddin Faroqui (1891-1971) came from a zamindar family of the Tippera district and claimed Arab descent. His ancestors held jaigirs (rent-free land in lieu of service to the government) of the Mughal Government. He was educated in Dacca College. He married the eldest daughter of A.K. Ghuznavi (who was also a maternal uncle of his). An Executive Councillor in 1929, He became a government minister in 1929 and held several responsible positions like that of the Chairman, Tippera District Board, Commissioner, Comilla Municipality, Member of the Assam Bengal Railway Board and Member of the Dacca University Court. He first entered the Bengal Legislature in 1921; he was again elected to the Council in 1926 and 1929. Although in 1936 he was elected to the provincial legislature as an independent candidate he gradually took more interest in commerce and industry and left active politics. After independence he stayed behind in Calcutta because of his business interest there. He received the title of Nawab in 1932 and a Knighthood in 1939. (Interview with Justice Abu S. Choudhury, ex-President, Bangladesh).

148. Khawaja Nazimuddin (1894-1964) was born in the Dacca Nawab family. He was educated at Aligarh and Cambridge obtaining his M.A. degree from the latter place. He had also done his Bar-at-Law, although never practising law. From 1922 to 1929 he was the Chairman of the Dacca Municipality. He was first elected to the Bengal legislature in 1923. He held a ministerial post from 1929-1936 and from 1937 to 1942 before he became the Chief Minister of Bengal under the 1935 Act in 1943 holding that office till 1945. He led the Indian delegation to the last session of the League of Nations in Geneva in 1946. After independence he became the first Chief Minister of East Pakistan in 1947 succeeding M.A. Jinnah as Governor-General of Pakistan in 1948 and then becoming the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1951. Nazimuddin was, however, ignominiously dismissed by Ghulam Mohammad who had succeeded him as the Governor-General. Nazimuddin was a moderate and pacifist in politics. D.N.B., III, 351-53.

made no secret of his disappointment and hostility¹⁴⁹ to the new ministry which he described as the 'handiwork' of the bureaucracy.¹⁵⁰ So estranged, Huq even abstained from voting on the all important (Rural) Primary Education Bill, a measure¹⁵⁰ of rural reform which as the leader of the Council Proja Party, Huq ought to have supported. Huq, of course, later explained¹⁵¹ his conduct by stating that although the Muslim M. L. C's as a bloc were unanimous in desiring the passage of the Bill without any further delay, he abstained from voting because he was opposed to the clause which taxed poor peasants to the exclusion of a large section of professional and business men. This sounded like an after-thought pronouncement which did not cut much ice with the members of his community as was evident from the bitter criticism¹⁵² of Huq's conduct by Sir Abdur Rahim, the President of the Nikhil Banga Proja Samiti.

The Proja Party, although adding a new style and dimension to the politics of the Bengal Muslims, however, offered no novelty with regard to leadership, particularly at the provincial level: there was no new blood amongst the office bearers of its

149. B.A.R., 1928-29, XI.

150. Statesman, 17 December, 1929.

151. Ibid, 19 August, 1930.

152. Statesman, 18 August, 1930.

central committee, every one of whom bore an all too familiar name in Bengal politics, some over two decades, making alliances amongst them in various combinations and as often breaking them.¹⁵³ These office bearers, as already noted, originally came from mofussil districts, but to look for a consistent pattern on this geographical basis becomes infructuous mainly for two reasons: firstly, all these men normally lived in Calcutta, some permanently and secondly, since the whole initiative for the party came from above, it started more as a club of big-wigs and their followers in the metropolis than anything else, party bosses being appointed from amongst themselves without any reference to the grass-root rural masses of course. It proved largely an ineffective body which, though formed in 1929, did not even start functioning as an affiliating body till 1932.¹⁵⁴ Even then the Nikhil Banga Proja Samiti did not enjoy the confidence of all the mofussil samitis— the Tippera Krishak Samiti, for instance, refused¹⁵⁵ to recognise the jurisdiction of the Nikhil Banga Proja Samiti, thus remaining consistently outside its pale and even sending its members to the provincial

153. In the absence of any party documents such as manifestos or agreed programmes it is difficult to explain the basis of the combination of different leaders on the platform of the Proja Party. On what understanding Abdur Rahim and Abdullah Suhrawardy, in opposite camps in the 1920's, now came together on the same platform cannot be discovered.

154. Shah Abdul Hamid and others, 'Nikhil Banga Proja Party Samiti, An Appeal', Azad, 6 December, 1936.

155. Ibid.

legislature on its own ticket.¹⁵⁶ The scant regard paid by the provincial Proja Samiti leaders^{to} the mofussil associations was also evident from the absence of the provincial top-brass from the very first session of the Dacca District Proja conference¹⁵⁷ early in 1935 at Demra, about fifteen miles south west of Dacca town. Although Fazlul Huq had in advance consented to inaugurate the conference and Abdul Momin to preside over its proceedings, both failed to keep their appointments—Huq on the ground of 'heavy preoccupations', and Momin on that of health.¹⁵⁸

The peasant movement in Bengal in the 1930's therefore flourished mainly through the efforts of secondary leaders¹⁵⁹ at the district and lower levels. The slump in the prices of

156. In the provincial elections in 1937 the Tippera Krishak Samiti caputred 5 of the 10 Muslim seats of the District. See Return Showing the Results of Election in India, 1937, 1937, cmd. 5589, 48.

157. Star of India, 5 February, 1935.

158. Ibid., 5 February, 1935.

159. These secondary leaders, too, like their mentors in the metropolis, were English-language educated professional men and small taluqdars of means and influence at their own level. The Mymensingh District Proja Samiti, for instance, was dominated by the members of the local bar and other influential men of the locality. Its members included a retired deputy magistrate and even a young zamindar. Its secretary, Abul Mansur Ahmed, a young lawyer, had also Congress, League and Anjuman connections. In his reminiscence, he also proudly claims a Wahhabi connection through the upward third generation and a Faraidi connection through the upward second generation. A. M. Ahmed, 2, 3, 54, passim.

crops, particularly of raw jute and paddy, and a consequent shortage of hard cash in the rural districts during this period caused severe economic distress in rural areas.¹⁶⁰ The relations between the agricultural tenants and their landlords thus became strained in many places.¹⁶¹ In such conditions the anti-landlord and pro-tenant propaganda of the Proja Party leaders and their agents won the distraught into the fold of the party.

The Proja and Krishak Samities flourished mainly in the east Bengal districts of Noakhali, Tippera, Dacca, Mymensingh, Pabna and Bogra;¹⁶² they were also active, if in a lesser degree, in Bakerganj, Rangpur, Dinajpur and in Murshidabad—¹⁶³ all Muslim majority districts— where zamindars and mahajans (money lenders), often the same persons, were predominantly Hindu. The primary object of these peasant associations was the amelioration of the peasant's lot mainly in respect of debt, and rent. Some of the district Proja Samitis,

160. Jackson to Templewood (Private) 27 August, 1931, Templewood Collection, MSS. Eur. E.240, 3-4; C.S., G. of B. to Secretary Pol. Deptt. G. of I. secret letter No.1051-P.S.D., 8 September, 1931. Home Department File No.4147/32-Poll. G. of I.C.P. Procs. Vol. 81, year 1932.

161. Jackson to Templewood (Private), 27 August, 1931, MSS. Eur. E. 240, 4.

162. B.A.R., 1933-34, XXX. See also F.R's for various months of 1932, 1933 and 1934. There are, however, no statistics of the Proja and Krishak Samitis.

163. B.A.R., 1933-34, XXX.

such as the Mymensingh District Proja Samiti which owned its own printing press and brought out its own organ, the Chāsi (the cultivator), a weekly Bengali-language magazine,¹⁶⁴ were quite strong organizations. In Tippera and Noakhali where peasant associations styled themselves Krishak Samitis rather than Proja Samitis, the peasant movement showed some socialistic proclivities and was militant in attitude.¹⁶⁵

The intensity or otherwise of peasant activity varied from one place to another and at different points of time¹⁶⁶ depending upon the strength or weakness of a particular Samiti, the general tone of the relationship between the landlord and the tenant in a particular locality and the local economic¹⁶⁷

164. A.M. Ahmed, 91.

165. F.R., February (2), 1934; Ibid, March (2), 1935.

166. F.R's of the period clearly show that peasant movements gained momentum when the harvest was bad, the rural economy was in utterly bad shape; the months following the winter harvest was the best period to activate the peasant masses and hold peasant rallies. On the other hand the sowing and the harvesting time saw little or no peasant activity at all. The onset of the monsoon in its full strength cutting Bengal hamlets into so many little islands effectively prevented the rural people from moving freely and brought a complete lull in political activities.

167. B.A.R., 1933-34, XXX-XXXI.

condition. In Rajshahi division the tenant-landlord relationship in 1933, for instance, was generally good, if not cordial. The landlords here if unwilling to forego their claims, which many tenants were then unable to meet because of the bad state of the rural economy, did not go to the law courts for a decree at that moment.¹⁶⁸ The tenants on their part too showed no tendency, as had then become the fashion, to repudiate their liabilities except by pressing for easy terms or postponement of collection of rent on the part of the landlords' agents.¹⁶⁹ In contrast the distrust between landlords and tenants in Noakhali and Tippera districts led to open clashes between landlords, moneylenders and Samiti members.¹⁷⁰ There were instances of attacks on money lenders' houses, arson and looting.¹⁷¹ The Congress newspapers¹⁷² of Calcutta took up the cause of the Hindu landlords and money lenders, and squarely blamed the local

168. F.R., May (1), 1933.

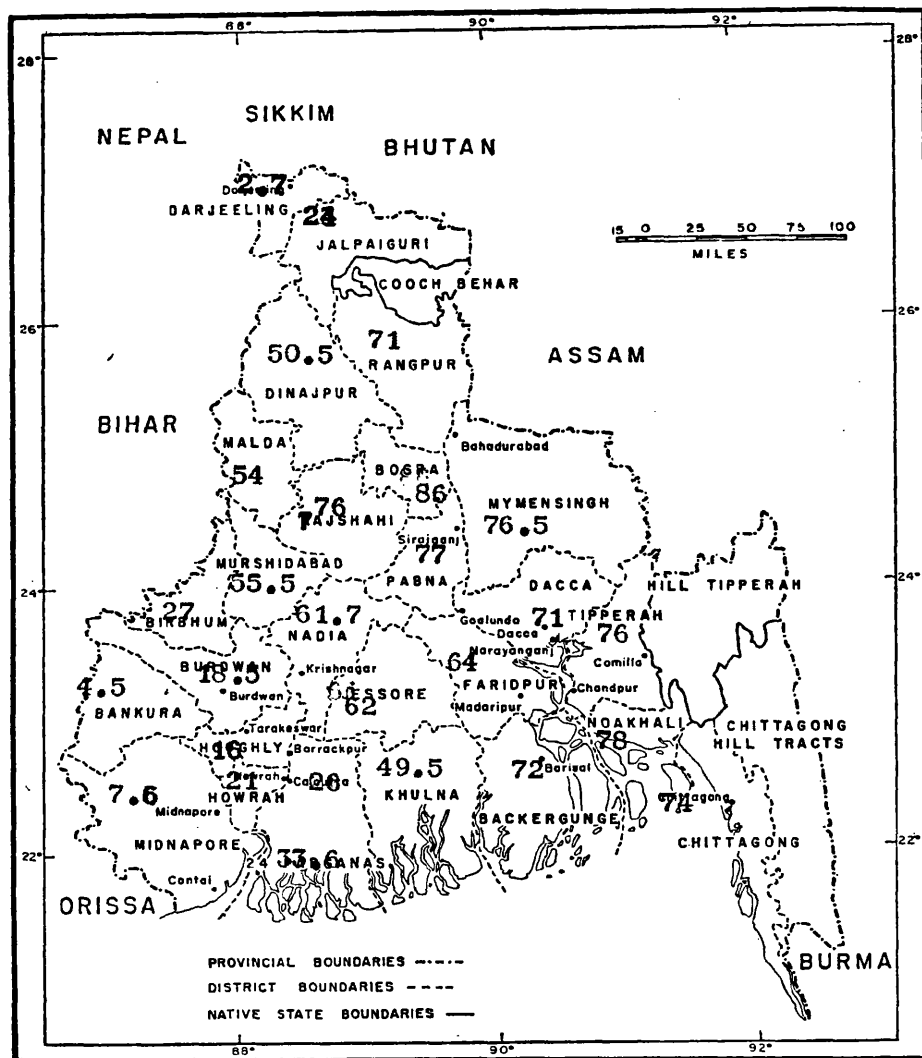
169. Ibid. There were, however, certain pockets of anti-landlord activity in the Rajshahi division. For instance in Bogra, Rajibuddin Tarafdar led a strong peasant Samiti advocating repudiation of rent and debt obligations. See F.R., February (1), 1934.

170. B.A.R., 1933-34, XXX; F.R., January (2), 1934.

171. F.R. May (1) and (2), 1933.

172. Advance, 13 December, 1931; F.R., April (2), 1933.

PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIMS IN VARIOUS DISTRICT OF BENGAL
ACCORDING TO 1931 CENSUS



administration¹⁷³ for not being harder on the peasant

Samiti leaders and their followers.

Factionalism and wranglings for office in the Nikhil Banga Proja Samiti and in its affiliated branches sapped the vitality of the movement within years of its coming into existence. It all began with a scramble between Fazlul Huq and Abdul Momin over the succession to the office of President of the Samiti which fell vacant in 1934 after its original incumbent had resigned¹⁷⁴ on his becoming the President of the Indian Legislative Assembly. On this question, the Samiti members became divided on regional lines¹⁷⁵ - those from East Bengal putting their weight behind Huq who also came from East Bengal, and those from West Bengal backing Momin, a West Bengal man. Almost all of Huq's backers were younger men with a militant outlook, while Momin's supporters were mostly older conservatives.¹⁷⁶ Neither group ^{being} very sure of the outcome

173. The government policy with regard to the peasant movement and associations was one of caution and of care not to overreact either way. While at places like Mymensingh, Bogra, Tippera and Noakhali, militant peasant Samiti leaders were placed under restricted movement or banned from making public speeches or join public meetings or rallies, local government officials, at the same time actually helped on the organization of Samitis, and in the development of peasants' political ideas in places like Bakerganj and Rajshahi. F.R. May(2), 1933.

174. A.M. Ahmed, 80.

175. K. Ahmad, The Social History of East Pakistan, 30.

176. A.M. Ahmed, 80.

of a vote, they appointed Rahim as an umpire whose choice fell upon Momin.¹⁷⁷ Huq, however, in utter disregard of the umpire's verdict installed himself as the President of the Samiti with the backing of his own men.¹⁷⁸ He held this office till 1937 when the party itself had become moribund.

Huq also clung on to the chairmanship of the Samiti's annual conference throughout the life of the Samiti. This in turn resulted in bad blood¹⁷⁹ between Huq and Akram Khan, the secretary of the provincial committee. Akram Khan who had backed Momin for the Samiti presidency in 1934, wanted Momin to preside over the annual Samiti conference at Mymensingh in 1935. The Mymensingh District Samiti, playing host to the conference was, however, a stronghold of Huq, and despite the fact that Huq had presided over the previous year's conference, he was elected to the chair in 1935 too.¹⁸⁰ This ensured a bitter vitriolic battle between the two squabbling factions. Akram Khan as the Secretary of the provincial committee of the party ordered a postponement¹⁸¹ of the conference, although the Huq-faction, with its superior

177. A.M. Ahmed, 81.

178. 'The Future of the Proja Movement, Need for Far-Sighted Leadership' (leader-article), Star of India, 22 May, 1935.

179. K. Ahmad, 30.

180. Star of India, 29 January and 10 February, 1936. The Delegate's fee to the Conference was Rs.2; Reception Committee membership fee was one rupee; visitor's fee 8 annas to Rs.2, and fees for special seats were Rs.25, Rs.10 and Rs.5.

181. Ibid, 9 february, 1935.

strength, held the conference as scheduled with Huq presiding.¹⁸² Akram Khan and others after that discreetly dropped out of the party. With the election under the 1935 Act due in early in 1937, the Huq-faction changed the nomenclature of the party from Proja Party to Krishak Proja Party thus giving the party a broader base, obviously with the hope of wooing the rural voters. This was done at the annual conference of the Proja Party at Dacca in July, 1936.¹⁸³

At the other end of the spectrum a new wave of political activity struck Bengal, as indeed other parts of India, following the appointment of the Simon Commission¹⁸⁴ in 1927 which was entrusted with the task of enquiring into India's eligibility for fresh constitutional advance. The first Indian reaction to the Commission without any exception was, of course, one of disappointment and anger at Indians' exclusion¹⁸⁵ from it. After making their feelings known to the British all the political parties came round to cooperating with the Commission except the Indian National Congress which clung steadfastly to its policy of boycott of the Commission.

182. Star of India, 11 and 12 February, 1935.

183. Ibid, 16-18 July, 1936.

184. The Commission was appointed under Section 84a of the Government of India Act which had provided for a decennial reviews of the working of the reforms and of further constitutional advance on the record of its working. The Conservative Government anticipated the date by an amendment of the 1919 Act in view of a general election in England due in 1929 for they

The Muslims in Bengal, as in India as a whole, were at that time organizationally very weak. The All-India Muslim League split into two — one faction led by M. A. Jinnah boycotting the Commission, another group led by Sir Muhammad Shafi of the Punjab showing itself willing to cooperate with the work of the Commission. In Bengal, the Presidency Muslim League was in fact controlled by the pro-Congress Muslims; its President Sir Abdur Rahim and a few others like Fazlul Huq, Akram Khan and Mujibur Rahman came out openly against the Commission. Both Rahim and Huq were then bitterly frustrated on their not becoming ministers and had allied themselves with the Swarajists in their ministry-wrecking tactics. Their anti-Commission attitude was more of a gesture against the bureaucracy than a long-term policy and was only transitory. Both, however, abstained¹⁸⁶ from the pro-Jinnah Muslim League conference held in Calcutta in

were not prepared to give the Labour Party, if it won at the polls, which it actually did, the credit for appointing the Commission. See Lord Birkenhead, The Life of F. E. Smith, First Earl of England, 511-12.

185. It was a Statutory Commission and no Indian was on it.

186. Jackson to Birkenhead, (Private), 12 January, 1928, MSS. Eur. D.703, 22; Statesman, 31 December, 1927. See also A.H. Ghaznavi's press statement attacking the Conference as unrepresentative of the Muslim interest. Statesman, 31 December, 1927.

December, 1927 in which a resolution in favour of boycott of the Commission was passed.

On the other hand the Central National Mohammedan Association, a conservative Muslim organization led by A.K. Ghuznavi was strongly in favour of cooperating¹⁸⁷ with the Commission, notwithstanding their disappointment with its composition. Early in December nineteen prominent Muslims of Bengal headed by A.K. Ghuznavi in a press statement pledged their support to the Commission. A.K. Ghuznavi also led a Bengali contingent to the pro-Commission Shafi section of the Muslim League session which was held in Lahore¹⁸⁸ simultaneously with the Jinnah-headed session of the League in Calcutta. Other Bengali Muslim politicians did not make their attitude to the Commission known immediately.¹⁸⁹

Meanwhile various political parties and groups, including the Congress, began drawing up their constitutional demands dividing themselves on communal lines. The Congress was first to come out with its blue print of a constitution for independent India in what came to be known as the Nehru

187. Statesman, 17 November, 1927. See also 'A.K. Ghuznavi's press statement', Ibid, 27 November, 1927.

188. Statesman, 1 January, 1928. Ghuznavi moved the main resolution of the Conference. Ten prominent Bengali Muslim M. L. A's, M. L. C's sent a message wishing the Conference a success.

189. Jackson to Birkenhead, (Private), 17 November, 1927 and 1 December, 1927, MSS. Eur. D.703, 21.

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Report— called after Motilal Nehru, the veteran Congress leader who had headed the committee drafting the constitutional proposals. The Nehru Report discarded such constitutional safeguards as separate electorates, with reservation of seats for the Muslims, which the Muslims regarded as a sine qua non for their political existence and this hardened the attitude of the Muslim community in Calcutta and elsewhere. By August 1928, Fazlul Huq and Abdur Rahim had reversed their stand on the boycott of the Commission and had agreed to work with it.

The upshot of the Nehru Report was that no Muslim with some hold on his community would any longer speak of an agreement with the Congress on the basis of joint electorates, and in March, 1929 Jinnah presented his fourteen points¹⁹¹

190. For the text of the Nehru Report see All India Congress Committee, All Parties Conference 1928. Report of the Constitution Committee, appointed by the Conference to determine the principles of the constitution for India.

191. Jinnah's 'Fourteen Points' were formulated on the basis of the amendments he had suggested to the Nehru Report at the All Parties' Convention in Calcutta in December, 1928. The Fourteen Points were then drafted as a resolution to be moved at a All-India Muslim League meeting in March 1929 as the 'irreducible' Muslim demands in future constitution for India. Among other things these demands included federation at the centre and complete provincial autonomy with residuary powers vested in the provinces, separate electorates, etc. For the text of Fourteen Points see Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution 1921-47, 244-47.

which included a demand for separate representation for Muslims. Still more important was the convention of the All-India Muslim Conference held in Delhi under the chairmanship of Aga Khan in January, 1929, which drafted a document of constitutional demands¹⁹² for the Indian Muslims as a counter to the Nehru Report. The Conference passed resolutions demanding that the future constitution should provide for an Indian federation of completely autonomous States with the residuary powers vested in the constituent States; the Muslims should retain the right to elect their representatives through separate electorates and they should continue to have weightage in the Hindu majority provinces and that the Muslims should be guaranteed their due share in the central and provincial cabinets. Another demand contained in the resolutions of the Conference, which had a direct bearing on Bengal and the Punjab provinces, was that the Muslim majority in all Muslim majority provinces

192. Statesman, 2 January, 1929. Report of the All-India Muslim Conference held at Delhi on 31 December, 1928 and 1st January, 1929 Gwyer and Appadorai, 245-47.

should in no way be disturbed. All future memoranda¹⁹³ from individual leaders or organizations recognised by government to be representatives of the Muslim community were invariably based on this document.

In Bengal Sir Abdur Rahim had long before outlined an Indian constitution in similar vein in the manifesto of the Bengal Moslem Party¹⁹⁴ in 1926, later reiterated by him at the Bengal Muslim Conference¹⁹⁵ at Barisal in May, 1927 and at the Bengal Muslim All-Parties Conference¹⁹⁶ at

193. For example the 'Memorandum on the Working of the Dyarchical System and Suggestions for further Reforms' by Alhadj Sir Abdelkerim Ghuznavi, Simon Commission, XVI, II; Memorandum submitted by the All-India Muslim League', Simon Commission, XVI, I.

194. I. Q. R., 1926, I, 65-67, Ibid, 1926, II, 95-98.

195. Statesman, 11 March, 1927. One of the resolutions passed in the conference urged that the future constitution of the country should be on the 'basis of a federation of autonomous provinces with Dominion Status, the function of the Central Government being confined to the administration of subjects directly concerning the army, the Navy, the Air Force, foreign relations, communications, currency, fiscal policy, relations between India and England and other dominions....'

196. I. A. R., 1928, II, 418-20; Statesman, 24 December, 1928.

Calcutta in December, 1928. Following the Delhi All-India Muslim Conference early in 1929 incorporating the Muslim demands, a Bengal Moslem All Parties Conference¹⁹⁷ was held at Calcutta in December, 1929 with Abdullah Suhrawardy presiding. Suhrawardy had earlier served as a member on the Indian Central Committee, a committee of Members of the Indian Legislative Assembly appointed by the Viceroy to assist in the work of the Simon Commission. In that capacity he had submitted a 'Supplementary Note' which the Chairman of the Committee, Sankaran Nair, had excluded from the Committee Report when it was published. Suhrawardy, however, forcefully argued with the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India against this action of the Chairman and his 'Supplementary Note' was later published as a separate Command Paper. This had left a bitter feeling in Suhrawardy and in his community. So, the first resolution which the Bengal Moslem All Parties Conference passed was in censure¹⁹⁸ of the Chairman of the Indian Central Committee and requested the Viceroy either to take early action for the

197. Statesman, 31 December, 1929.

198. Ibid., 31 December, 1929. See also Abdullah Suhrawardy's letter of 4 January, 1930 to Wedgewood Benn, the Secretary of State for India. A copy of the resolutions passed at this conference was enclosed with the letter. L/P&J File No. 4547 of 1929, L/P&J/6/1991.

publication of Suhrawardy's note presenting the Muslim case or to permit Suhrawardy to publish it himself. How strained the relations between the Hindus and Muslims had become was clearly demonstrated in Suhrawardy's presidential speech in which he said, "Moslems will on no account tolerate the substitution of British domination in India by the Brahmanical domination and tyranny of the majority."¹⁹⁹ This clearly reflected the Muslim fear²⁰⁰ of a future constitution which in their opinion did not adequately safeguard Muslim rights and interests.

199. Statesman, 31 December, 1929.

200. Long before the appointment of the Simon Commission Sir Stanely Jackson, the Governor of Bengal, expressing his premonition of possible tension on communal lines when the Pandora's box of reforms was opened, wrote to the Secretary of State for India thus: 'I am almost afraid that any extension of reforms will mean more communal trouble. The Muhammadans are terrified of the Hindus getting hold of the executive powers—as they probably would, and they (the Muslims) don't mean to let them (the Hindus) do this easily' Jackson to Berkenhead, 9 May, 1927, MSS. Eur. D. 703, 21.

Thus an Indian federation consisting of full autonomous provinces with the residuary powers vested in the federating units, separate electorates with reservation of seats commensurate with their numerical strength formed the core of the Muslim constitutional demands. The Muslim demands were, however, the complete antithesis of the Hindu demands incorporated in the Nehru Report which advocated a unitary responsible government at the centre as a more practicable concept, one which was also backed by the India Government.²⁰¹ The Nehru Report also envisaged the abolition of the separate electorates and of weightage. The leaders of both communities being equally adamant in their stand, there was apparently no meeting ground for the two communities on the constitutional issues.

The leaders of the two communities having failed to reach an understanding on the question of electorates and representation even at the Round Table Conferences, Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister, announced in August, 1932 a scheme of communal representation, later called the 'Communal Award' or the MacDonald Award.²⁰² The Award upheld separate

201. Government of India's Despatch, 1930, Cmd.3700, 12-13, 100.

202. For the text of Prime Minister's announcement of the Award and apportionment of seats in the Bengal legislature among various communities and interests, see East India (Constitutional Reforms) : Communal Decision, 1932, Cmd.4147.

electorates and provided for a House of two hundred and fifty²⁰³ in Bengal in which the Muslims were assigned one hundred and nineteen seats and the Hindus eighty including ten for the Depressed Classes²⁰⁴ Hindus, later to be called the Scheduled Classes, who were for the first time given elective representation in the legislature.

Although the Award gave the Muslims a majority of the elected seats in the House, some of their leaders complained that it still fell far short of their demand for their proportional representation. Nor did it, these leaders argued, give the Muslims a majority in the House as a whole. Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, an M.L.A. who had sat in the Round Table Conferences as a representative of the Bengal Muslims held that the caste Hindus²⁰⁵ in Bengal still got more²⁰⁶ seats under the Award than their number would have entitled them to had the Award been given on the basis of population. The Bengal Government, however, held that the Muslim

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203. Allocation of seats in the Bengal legislature under the Communal Award: Muhammadans-119(including 2 women); General(Hindu)-80(including 5 women and 10 Depressed Classes); Indian Christian-2; Anglo-Indian-4(including 1 woman); European-11; Commerce and Industry, Mining and Planting-19; Landholders-5; University-2; Labour-8.
204. The caste and the Depressed Classes Hindus, however, modified the Award between themselves by a Pact, called the Poona Pact under which the Depressed Classes got an additional 20 seats in return for the surrender of their separate electorates given under the Award. This raised their seats to 30 bringing down the caste Hindus' to 50. See R. Coupland, India: A Restatement, 141; S. C. Bose, The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, 221-22, 247-48, 287-88.
205. The Hindus, of course, rejected the Award. See chapter on Hindu Politics.
206. Star of India, 19 December, 1933.

demand for a statutory majority was being projected more as 'an offset to Hindu demands than as a demand in itself sustainable'.²⁰⁷

Some pro-Congress Muslims expressed their dissatisfaction at the retention of separate electorates, although they remained silent about the distribution of seats in the House. They, of course, normally opposed separate electorates and now in the support of their stand they added the logic that separate electorates with reservation of seats rendered the Muslims to a statutory minority in the House. These Muslims, however, exercised little influence on their community, and the Bengal Government dismissed them as 'unimportant'.²⁰⁸

Some of the Muslim leaders like A.H.Ghuznavi and H.S.Suhrawardy as were accepted by the Government as representatives of their community, however, then had realised that joint electorates with reservation of seats would not harm the Muslim interest. They had before them the example of the results of local and district board elections during the past few years. In these elections,²⁰⁹ though held under the joint electorate system, the Muslims had done very well, particularly in the Muslim majority districts of east Bengal. Accordingly Ghuznavi, Suhrawardy and a few other Muslim leaders worked out a plan in 1933 with

207. G.of B. to G.of I. Telegram R.64,25 August,1932. Home Department File No.31/113/32-Poll.,G.of I.C.P. Procs.,vol.81, year 1932.

208. Ibid.

209. Azizul Huque would not, however, accept these results as a fair index of Muslim dependence on joint electorate. A.Huque, Separate Electorates in Bengal, 6-21.

B.C.Chatterjee, a Hindu M.L.C., to try out an experiment with joint electorate on certain conditions. The Ghuznavi-Chatterjee pact²¹⁰ agreed on the undisturbed continuance of the allotment of seats in the Bengal legislature under the communal Award for ten years after which the two communities would get an equal number of seats under a joint electorate scheme. The principle of fifty-fifty was also to apply in the appointment of ministers and in the field of public employment.²¹¹ Nothing further, however, was heard of the Pact after it had been reached.²¹² Ghuznavi later made a similar pact with the Maharaja of Burdwan, the fate of which was not any better than the earlier Ghuznavi-Chatterjee Pact. Communal separatism thereafter thrived more vigorously than ever before.

210. Star of India, 19 December, 1933.

211. Ibid.

212. A.H.Ghuznavi to B.C.Mahtab, Maharaja of Burdwan, 17 December, 1936, L/PO/40; Burdwan to Ghuznavi, 18 December, 1936, ibid.

Chapter II

HINDU POLITICS

This chapter deals with Hindu politics, particularly of the Congress variety, in Bengal between 1927 and 1936 when much of Indian political action took place in the provinces following the devolution of a range of powers to Indian hands under the Government of India Act, 1919. The reformed constitution of 1919 which was formally inaugurated in 1921, had given provinces new enlarged and responsible legislatures with an elective majority and wider jurisdiction than before. The Bengal Legislative Council, as the provincial legislature was called, now comprised one hundred and thirty-nine¹ members, one hundred and thirteen² elected and twenty-six nominated, in place of fifty-four, nearly half of whom were nominated, under the Indian Councils Act, 1909 which the new constitution had replaced. The new constitution made council politics more attractive than had been the case before, for it then extended the jurisdiction of the House over all legislative business including the government finance bills, although these enlarged powers were more than evenly matched by the special

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1. One more elective seat, that of the Dacca University constituency, was created before the second election to the Bengal legislature in 1923, thus raising the total strength of the House to 140. Dacca University was established in 1921, and the first election under the 1919-Act was held in 1920.
 2. 114 from 1923.

powers of the Governor under which he could, and on several occasions as he actually did, overrule the decision of the house both in matters of legislation and supplies. On the other hand, the new constitution did ensure greater Indian participation through the appointment of responsible ministers from among the elected members of the House, entrusted with the administration of lesser government departments called the Transferred Departments³ as distinct from the Reserved Departments⁴ which were presided over by senior civil servants and nominated non-official Indians with the designation of Executive Councillors.

The reforms had, at the same time, activated more areas in the hinterland than before by placing greater patronage and other resources of influence at the disposal of local government institutions like union boards, district boards and municipalities. The 1919 constitution had also greatly enlarged the size of the electorate by raising the number of council electors from nine thousand⁵ in 1909 to over a million⁶ in 1919. This was done by prescribing a franchise qualification

3. They were Local Self-Government; Public Health and Medical; Education and Registration; Agriculture and Industries, Excise and Public Works Department.
4. They were Appointment, Political and Police, Revenue and Irrigation; Finance, Commerce, Marine; and Judicial and Jails Departments.
5. The electorate under the Morely-Minto constitution comprised some 9000 voters. See Report of the Franchise Committee, 1919, 38.
6. Pp, 1921, XXVI, cmd. 1261 (1921), 10-13. The total number of voters in 1921 was 1,021,418.

almost similar to that of union board and municipal voters.⁷ For instance, in the rural areas a person paying one rupee in cess or two rupees in union rate or chaukidari tax was entitled to register himself as a council elector, whereas he became an union board voter by paying one rupee in cess or in union board rate or chaukidari tax. In the urban areas except in Calcutta, payment of taxes of one rupee and a half entitled a person to become both a municipal and council voter. For Howrah district it was, however, a payment of taxes of three rupees which entitled a person to become a voter both in municipal and council elections. A visible distinction was, however, made between council and municipal voters in Calcutta. Here owners and occupiers of property of the value of one hundred and fifty rupees per annum, or persons either owning or occupying property of the value of three hundred rupees per annum, and persons paying twenty-four rupees in rates or taxes became a council voters. But in the case of the Calcutta Corporation persons either owning or occupying premises and paying twelve rupees directly in rates, or persons paying twelve rupees as license tax were enrolled as voters.

The reforms, particularly the new electoral roll, thus, on the face of it, were bound to create problems of control and communication for the city-based Hindu politicians. For, whether they decided to work the reforms or press the

7. Simon Commission, VIII, 128-29.

government for further concessions, they now needed local bastions from where to extend their influence. The extended franchise would apparently require the Hindu politicians to relate their Calcutta-based politics with local needs and cultivate relationship with districts which they had so long ignored. It will be worthwhile to examine in course of this chapter as to how real a threat ^{did} the reforms pose to the Hindu politicians and how did the latter respond to this situation and with what results.

The Hindu response to the reforms was conditioned by two main factors—the structure of the Hindu polity represented by the bhadralok,⁸ and the position of Calcutta as the gravitational centre of Bengali politics. The bhadralok (lit. respectable people or gentle-folk) were a social elite, a product of the Permanent Settlement of land revenue and English language education introduced during the early years of the British rule in India. They were a status group sharing a common life-style, common cultural attachment and sense of values, enjoying a superior economic position to the masses whom they despised and kept at a distance by their caste and

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8. For elaborate discussion on bhadralok see S. N. Mukherjee, 'Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-1838' in E. Leach and S. N. Mukherjee, Elites in South Asia; S. N. Mukherjee, 'Bhadralok in Bengali Language and Literature: An Essay on the language of class and status' in Bengal Past and Present, XV XCV, II, July-December 1976, 225-35; Bengal District Administration Committee, 1913-1914, Report, 1919; R. Carstairs, The Little World of an Indian District Officer; J. C. Jack, The Economic Life of Bengal District: A Study; J. H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal, 12-20.

class proscriptions. They were also distinguished for their attitude to commerce, which they regarded as a demeaning occupation, and by their avoidance of physical labour such as the tilling of the soil. The bhadralok thus secured fees in the middle ground of professional and clerical employment and from rents from land.

The term bhadralok denoting a social group, distinguished both by class and caste, was first used probably in 1799 by an Englishman.⁹ It quickly found general acceptance among the nascent Hindu elite. This is evident from the fact that a society formed in Calcutta in 1823 for the cultivation and promotion of Bengali culture and literature was named Gaudadeshiya Bhadralker Sabha or the Society of Bengali bhadralok.¹⁰ The term soon became a part of the political and social vocabulary of Bengal and it made its way into native newspapers and journals which were then just coming up.

The term, however, rarely found mention in government records, which, till the fag end of the nineteenth century, rather preferred terms like educated natives or bābus to bhadralok. It found wide currency only during and after the anti-partition agitation of 1905-1911, and it assumed a sociological significance after it found its way

9. By H. P. Foster, a senior member of the Bengal administration in his A Vocabulary in two parts, English and Bengali and vice versa. See S. N. Mukherjee, Bengal Past and Present, XCV, II, 229.

10. Mukherjee, ibid, 230.

into the Calcutta University Commission Report, 1917 and in the Cambridge History of India. Meanwhile, the term also appeared in Bengal District Administration Committee, 1913-1914, Report and in the Census of India, 1901 and 1911.

The bhadralok were a hierarchically-ordered elite, divided into many dals or factions. At the apex of this pyramidal structure stood the abhiyat bhadralok¹¹ or the landed Hindu aristocracy created by the Permanent Settlement. They provided leadership to the Bengali society till the second decade of the latter half of the nineteenth century, as the British while administering the country themselves had contracted out the control of the society to dalapatis or faction leaders.¹² The rich landed proprietors as principal beneficiaries of the Permanent Settlement, on the other hand, looked to the undisturbed continuance of British rule as insurance to their entrenched interest. For, they were afraid that any undue shake-up of the administrative structure was sure to recoil on themselves and imperil their privileged position. To them, political concessions were worth having only if they came gradually and in the gift of the government without disturbing the social fabric. Their politics was, therefore, one of discreet manipulation of state patronage and promotion of their own interest rather than of bringing overt pressure to bear upon the government for concessions.

11. S. N. Mukherjee, Bengal, Past and Present, XCII, 230.

12. For factions and faction-fights in the nineteenth century, see S. N. Mukherjee, 'Daladali' in Modern Asian Studies, 9.1., 59-80.

Below the abhijāt bhadralok were the madhyabitto¹³ (men of middle income) or the middle class that had emerged as a distinct group in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The upper stratum of it, the uchcha madhyabitto or the upper middle class, was represented predominantly by a class of superior ryots or tenants called jotedars, and the lower stratum, the nimno madhyabitto or the lower middle class, by grihasta bhadralok¹⁴ or the local rural gentry of lesser parvenus like mandals (village headmen), mātbars (village leaders) and employees in local zamindari establishments. It was from the ranks of the madhyabitto class that the urban professional, comprador and service groups were largely drawn.

Jotedars held their jotes or plots of cultivable land on direct lease from zamindars; and with their holdings at places running to six thousand acres they often let out portions of their large holdings to under-ryots, thus raising themselves to the position of sub-infeudatory rentiers or under farmers of revenue. This class of rich tenants who as resident landlords maintained the effective possession of their land, exercised more influence in the village and were better off than many zamindars. Besides enjoying the social authority of the dominant landholding class in the village, the superior

13. Mukherjee, Bengal Past and Present, XCV, II, 230; Broomfield, 15.

14. Mukherjee, , 232.

ryots commanded enormous economic and political power as the main suppliers of rural credits: they were money lenders, grain dealers and principal employers of agricultural labour. Share-croppers and landless labourers, lacking cash, seed and food grains, turned to these village-based bosses for loans, both in cash and kind, pledging their labour and becoming bonded labourers in the course of perpetual borrowing.¹⁵

The urban middle class had their strongest hold in district towns and in Calcutta, the metropolis. At these places they had consolidated their position as district board members, municipal commissioners, members of the university senate and local education committees, as honorary magistrates, lawyers, doctors, educationists, journalists, clerks and government officials. By 1876, they had founded their own political association, the Indian Association, which dominated the Congress organization in Bengal from its very inception in the late 1880's to 1918.

The bhadralok, however, did not represent a monolithic class structure. On the contrary, there existed considerable social differentiation within their ranks. Grown over a long time scale, which had, in turn, resulted in generational gaps between various segments of the class, the bhadralok came to have differing values and political orientation depending on

15. Rajat and Ratna Ray, 'Zamindars and Jotedars: a study of Rural Politics in Bengal' in Modern Asian Studies, 9, 1, 84.

the dominating influences of the formative period of their lives. For instance, the abhijāt bhadralok, the earliest of the English-language educated Bengali elite, who had grown up in the liberal and reformist zeal of the Brahmo movement and had come to enjoy superior socio-economic privileges till the close of the nineteenth century by virtue of their monopolistic control of the land and other new opportunities under the British rule, drew the lesson of moderation and constitutionalism in politics. Aware of the value of the symbiotic relationship between themselves and the British rāj, the abhijāt bhadralok kept a low profile over their political demands which they had sought to realise through a laborious apprenticeship in the art of parliamentary government and within the frame-work of the British rāj rather than by radical political action. The madhyabitto, both upper and lower were, on the other hand, late arrivals on the socio-political scene of Bengal. They had grown up partly in the Derozean¹⁶ legacy of revolt against all forms of authority, whether parental, social or sacerdotal, and partly in the growing spirit of Hindu cultural and religious revivalism of the late nineteenth century aimed at the political revitalisation of the Indian Hindus. These two

16. Vivian Henry Derozio (1809-31), an Eurasian of mixed Portuguese-Indian descent from Calcutta, was a lecturer at ^{the} Hindu College (now Presidency College) who successfully transmitted to his pupils the thought and spirit of the European Enlightenment and intellectual freedom. Apart from being well-versed in

apparently contradictory forces, however, led to the same end-product of political extremism which was further reinforced by the influence of new social and political ideals, particularly those of the British utilitarian school, which had forced their way into India either in the form of vigorous and agitational literature imported from Europe or in the form of newspaper articles.¹⁷ The expansion of western education, particularly after the establishment of Calcutta University in 1857 with others to follow elsewhere in the country had greatly facilitated the dissemination of bright hewed theories of reform, and new political formulae with their explosive potential which had made a deep impression on the educated urban youth, particularly in Calcutta.

Another important factor influencing the politics of the madhyabitto was the growing economic strains of the land-owning class of Bengal. Since the closing decades of the nineteenth century the income of the bhadralok from land had fallen considerably due to uneconomic subinfeudation of rent holdings. The number of rent receivers in Bengal rose from 978,016 in 1901 to 1,205,266 in 1911, to 1,319,302 in 1921¹⁸ and to 1,424,812 in 1931.¹⁹ In other

the works of Adam Smith, Bentham, Berkeley, Locke, Mill, Hume and Kant, Derozio was deeply influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution principally by those of Rousseau. The Derozians, his pupils seeking inspiration in his life and work, in later years came to be known collectively as 'young Bengal'.

17. C. U. C. R. 1, 1, 122.

18. Census of India, 1921, V, 1, 385.

19. Census of India, 1931, V. I, 292, *Subsidiary Table III.*

words, their number rose by 23 per cent. between 1901 and 1911, by 9 per cent. between 1911 and 1921, and by another 8 per cent. between 1921 and 1931 with the consequence that their income dwindled in 1921 to an average of Rs. 620 (£41)²⁰ gross a year. The impact of subinfeudation also became evident from the fact that of some 10,500 landlords in Dacca district some 9,000 had estates of less than one hundred acres,²¹ and of these 9,000 over half had annual incomes of below Rs. 30 from rents.²² In Rajshahi district, once an area of the greatest of zamindars, seven-eighths of some 1600 landlords had incomes from rent of less than Rs. 500 a year,²³ many of them, doubtless, towards the lower end of that scale. Again, in a district like Mymensingh where much of the land revenue was paid by large zamindars, eighty-one per cent. of some 9900 landlords paid less than fifty rupees as land revenue.²⁴

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20. Census of India, 1921, V.1, 385 'When it is remembered that no less than 10 per cent. has to come off for land revenue and the cost of collecting rents, though the small middlemen usually collect their rent themselves, and that a small number of great landlords take a large proportion of the assets of the land to themselves, it will be realised that most of the landlords and middlemen class in Bengal are by no means well to do'.
21. Sachin Sen, Studies in the Land Economics of Bengal, 296.
22. Ibid., 296.
23. Ibid., 296.
24. F.A. Sache, Mymensingh District Gazetteer, 101.

This proportion was still higher, eighty-six per cent., in the Dacca district. The landlords had also suffered from bad collections of rents, particularly during the depression years of the 1930's. In 1930-31 only thirty-five per cent. of the total government demand of Rs. 3.96 million²⁵ was collected. Consequently, landlords brought pressure to bear upon the government for deferment of rent collection and remission of penalties for defaulting kists (instalments of land revenue) at least for a year,²⁶ and government reduced the rate of penalty in 1931 from twenty-five percent. to two to three per cent. per mensem;²⁷ a further rebate was granted to them in 1935 by lowering the interest rate on arrears to six per cent. per annum.²⁸

At the same time the supplementary source of bhadralok income, that from white-collar jobs, had also dried up since the close of the nineteenth century as educated groups from other parts of India came to compete for such jobs in greater numbers demanding their priority for employment in the government departments of their own region over the 'outsiders' from Bengal.²⁹ The Bengali

25. Sen, 298. Land revenue comprised 21% of the rental during the period under study. At the time of introduction of the Permanent Settlement in 1793, it was 90% of the rental.

26. Dinajpur Landholders' Association's memorial to the Governor of Bengal, Statesman, 11 February 1931; Statesman, 10 March, 1932, see P.K. Chakraborty's (a landlord from Mymensingh) letter, 'The zamindar's plight'. A conference of Bengal zamindars in September, 1930 too mooted this point. Statesman, 21 September 1930.

27. Sen, 300.

28. Ibid, 300.

Muslims, who were then taking to English education steadily, had also come forward to claim their own share of government posts.³⁰ Meanwhile, the Bengal Government had decided in 1889 to fill two-thirds of the vacancies in the Subordinate Executive Service by nomination instead of by open competition to accommodate educationally less advanced groups.³¹ Although such vacancies did not at that time exceed ten in number a year, the bhadralok felt strongly against being so discriminated, especially as this came to apply gradually to other grades of posts and in more government departments. More office doors became shut to bhadralok youths following the economy drive in government departments after world war I. The Hindu elite had also a grievance against the tax on non-agricultural income, the burden of which had fallen unevenly on the shoulder of city-dwellers and more particularly on that of those residing in Calcutta, who paid nearly eighty per cent. of Bengal's income tax in 1918-19.³² The income-tax assessment in Bengal in 1922-23 amounted to Rs. 47.5 million³³ and in 1929-30 to Rs. 55.6 million.³⁴

29. J.H. Broomfield, 'The Regional Elites: A Theory of Modern Indian History' in Reinhard Bendix ed. State and Society, A Reader in Comparative Political Sociology, 559 (hereinafter State and Society).

30. Ibid, 559.

31. PP (1894), LX, 93.

32. Statistical Returns of Income Tax Department, Bengal, 1919, ii Quoted in John Gallagher, 'Congress in Decline: Bengal, 1930-39' in John Gallagher and others (eds.) Locality, Province and Nation, 276.

33. BAR, 1926-27, 222.

The bhadralok, on the other hand, felt threatened at the increasing bureaucratic interference towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries in the affairs of imported government institutions which they had come to look upon as integral parts of their power structure. They had bitterly resented the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1899 and the Universities Act, 1904, which had enforced tighter official control in the administration of the Calcutta Corporation and Calcutta University respectively, two strongholds of bhadralok power. This Indo-British tension reached its climax in Bengal in the determined bhadralok opposition to the partition of the province in 1905 when the moderate leadership with its technique of petition and persuasion became discredited, and an extremist leadership advocating new political techniques, that of boycott and passive resistance, came to the fore. The proponents of these new techniques had condemned all forms of British connection, whether in the field of education or culture or economics or politics, while upholding the value of self-reliance in all these fields as a means of reactivating Hindus towards the realisation

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34. BAR, 1929-30,¹⁴² Bengal paid the highest amount of income tax to the Central exchequer. In 1928-29, Bengal paid Rs. 62.5 million, Bombay Rs. 31.7 million, Madras Rs. 13.1 million and United Province Rs. 9.0 million as income tax. See Sen, 71.

of their goal of political supremacy in India.³⁵ They made political use of emotive Hindu religious symbols and images, the romantic appeal of which had made the greatest impact on the impressionable minds of younger people, mostly in their adolescence or in their early youth, many of whom had ended up joining in organised political violence. This, however, forms the subject matter of another chapter. Each faction of the Hindu elite seemed to have developed in turn its own brand of nationalism according to its particular interpretation of past Indian history but suited to its purpose. In doing so, each faction was endeavouring to establish its credibility as distinct political group for the capture of the future political power in India.³⁶ In the process each faction looked upon the other with distrust and incomprehension, sometimes angrily rejecting rival claims to even rank as nationalist.

The main focus of this chapter will be on the politics of the extremist bhadralok, who, after being kept out of the Bengal Congress by the moderates for a decade or so, wrested the control of the party apparatus from the latter

35. For the metamorphosis of political grouping and leadership in India, see Sankar Ghose, The Renaissance to Militant Nationalism in India.

36. Broomfield weighs between the 'monolithic' and 'container' concept of the Indian nationalism, the former claiming it to be a solid and homogenous phenomenon and the latter describing it as an amalgam of divergent views and aspirations; and he contends that the truth lies in between, both together forming an intimate connection between identity and perception of nationalism. See Broomfield, State and Society, 557-58.

in 1918, maintaining their hold on the party till 1947. The bhadralok seemed to have come out of the anti-partition agitation politically maturer and better aware than ever before of the vulnerability of their privileged position in a faction-ridden society in which existed considerable economic, communal, caste and class dissensions. The hazards of leading mass agitation from such an unstable position was brought home to them, probably more pointedly, by the example of violent attacks against the nobility and other propertied and socially privileged classes in Russia following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. So in deciding upon their strategy with regard to the reforms of 1919, the Bengali extremists under the leadership of Chittoranjana Das,³⁷ a Calcutta lawyer, were more inclined to follow

37. Chittoranjana Das (1870-1925) came of a Brahmo (originally Baidya) family of Dacca district. After graduating from Presidency College, Calcutta, he unsuccessfully took the I. C. S. examination to turn to the bar following the footsteps of his father and uncle, both of whom practised law at the Calcutta High Court. He made his fame in the over-crowded legal profession in Calcutta by successfully defending Aurobindo Ghose and others against charges of sedition in the political trials of 1907-1908. He, however, evinced little interest in active politics till the time of Montague-Chelmsford reforms. He came out a national political figure through the Non-Cooperation movement of 1921-22, further consolidating that position by his breach with Gandhi on the question of council entry and by the formation of the pro-council Swarajya party in 1923 with Pandit Motilal Nehru. As the Swarajya party leader in the Bengal legislature, he persistently refused to accept office and consistently followed a policy of obstruction to the working of the reforms. P. C. Ray, The Life and Times of C. R. Das; H. Das Gupta, Deshbandhu Chittoranjana Das; D.N.B., I, 339 - 343.

the safe course of genteel legislative politics, which involved relatively fewer people, than the dangerous course of council boycott and mass agitation, the wisdom of which they had now come to doubt from their past experiences of the anti-partition agitation (1905-1911) and the boycott of the reforms under the Indian Councils Act, 1909. They, therefore, opposed Gandhi's programme of Non-Cooperation, although finally joining forces with him, if only half-heartedly. Das took the earliest opportunity after the failure of the Non-Cooperation movement in 1922 to reverse the national Congress Party's policy of council-boycott in favour of council entry.³⁸ He led his faction to a land-slide electoral victory in 1923 under the banner of the newly-formed pro-council Swarajya party under the joint leadership of himself and Pandit Motilal Nehru with the programme of wrecking the reforms from inside the legislature. In this election the Swarajists had got forty-seven³⁹ of the fifty-seven

38. The pro-council proclivity of the Bengali Hindu extremists was demonstrated in the filing of nomination papers by twenty-five of them including Chittoranjana Das himself, as candidates in the conciliar election in 1920. They, however, withdrew their candidature subsequently under pressure from the national executive of the Congress party. See Simon Commission, VIII, 98.

39. Ibid, 155.

seats won by Hindus. They repeated their success in the subsequent elections, in fact the last two held under the 1919 Act in 1926 and 1929, when they had gone to the polls on Congress party tickets, the party having decided to contest elections on the eve of the third election under the 1919 Act in 1926. In 1926, the Swarajists won thirty-five⁴⁰ of the forty-six Non-Muhammadian constituency seats, as the general Hindu seats were designated under the 1919 Act, and their actual strength in the House was thirty-seven,⁴¹ In 1929, forty-four⁴² official Congress party members were returned in the election, besides^a a few others who, failing to secure party tickets, fought the election as independent candidates, although pledging support to the Congress party. All the official Congress party members, however, resigned their seats early in 1930 in compliance with a directive of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), the consultative committee of the Indian National Congress.

The election results reassured the bhadralok, dispelling their initial qualms about the enlarged electorate under the 1919 Act, that they had really nothing to fear from it so long as caste Hindu voters retained their numerical

40. Simon Commission, VIII, 161,

41. Ibid., 161.

42. BAR, 1928-29, X; Statesman, 15 June, 1929.

superiority over Muslim and low caste voters. Hindu voters in general Non-Muhammadan constituencies formed fifty-three percent of the entire electorate in Bengal compared to forty-five per cent Muslim voters in ^{the} Muhammadan constituencies.⁴³ The proportion of Hindu voters became much higher if those in Special constituencies, viz. University, Landholders and Indian commerce constituencies, where they had formed a preponderant majority, were taken into account. The system of separate electorates under which Hindu and Muslim voters elected fixed number of council members separately from their respective community,⁴⁴ a system which the bhadralok had detested as

43.

| Year | Total No. of voters in Bengal | Non-Muhammadan constituencies | | Muhammadan constituencies | |
|------|--|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|--|
| | | No. of Hindu voters | Proportion of total no. of voters | No. of Muslim voters | Proportion of total no. ov votes |
| 1920 | 1,021,418 | 541,189 | 53% | 465,127 | 46% |
| 1923 | 1,044,166 | 557,914 | 53% | 463,386 | 44% |
| 1926 | 1,184,784 | 623,217 | 53% | 529,995 | 45% |
| 1929 | 1,186,428 | 626,231 | 53% | 530,592 | 45% |

The rise in number of voters in 1924 in both communities was due to enfranchisement of women in that year. Compiled from PP, 1921, XXVI, Cmd. 1261 (1921), 10-13; PP, 1924, XVIII, Cmd. 2154 (1924), 25-36; PP, 1927, XVIII, Cmd. 2923 (1927), 14-16; PP, 1930-31, XXIV, Cmd. 3922 (1931), 16-18.

44. Forty-six Non-Muhammadan and thirty-nine Muhammadan constituencies each returned one member on the basis of separate electorate. The distribution of a total of 140 seats in the Bengal Legislative council was as shown below:

an all-India strategy of the Indian National Congress; yet paradoxically it was this same system which guaranteed them an elective majority in the legislature. For, besides their forty-six reserved seats against the thirty-nine of the Muslims, Hindus could safely count upon all the eleven special constituency seats as their own as these constituencies had invariably returned Hindu members throughout the period save in 1923 when one Muslim member was returned by the Dacca University constituency. The weight of separate electorate on bhadralok success in conciliar elections was well-demonstrated by their simultaneous failure to hold their majority in local bodies, particularly in Muslim majority areas, elections to which were held on the basis of joint electorates. For instance, their local board⁴⁵ majority in six of the fifteen districts of Rajshahi,

| Elective seats | | Non-elective seats | |
|---|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Constituencies | No. of seats | (filled by nomination) | No. of seats |
| Non-Muhammadian (urban and rural) | (11+35) = 46 | Depressed Classes | 1 |
| Muhammadian (urban and rural) | (6+33) = 39 | Indian christian | 1 |
| | | Labour | 2 |
| | | Others | 2 |
| | | Officials | 16 |
| | | Executive Councillors | 4 |
| <u>Special constituencies</u> | | | 26 |
| University, Landholders and Indian commerce | 2+5+4=11 | | |
| European (general and commerce) | (5+11)=16 | | |
| Anglo-Indian | 2 | | |
| | 114 | | |
| Total | | =, 140 | |

45. There were eighty-two local boards in Bengal in 1926-27 with 1335 members on them, one-third of whom were nominated and the rest elected. Each board covered an average area of 813 square miles

Dacca and Chittagong divisions in 1923-24 had been reduced in three districts in 1926-27, and in two in 1934-35.⁴⁶ The biggest electoral swing against Hindus and in favour of Muslims had occurred in Jessore district in the Presidency division where the latter forming about sixty-two per cent. of the population had increased their share of local board seats from just over thirty-three per cent. in 1920-21 to sixty-four per cent. in 1928-29, and to about sixty-six per cent. twice as much, in 1934-35.⁴⁷ The district board elections during the period too had repeated the same pattern. Here the Hindu majority in 1923-24 in nine of the fifteen districts mentioned above had dwindled ~~to~~ five districts only in 1934-35.⁴⁸ Evidently, joint electorates the principle of which the Congress party had passionately espoused, back-fired on ^{the} Bengali Hindus. Many of them, particularly those

with an average population of 512,250. The number of boards and their members rose to eighty-four and 1383 respectively in 1934. 869 of these members were elected, 429 nominated and 85 officials. See Simon Commission, VIII, 63, 76; BAR, 1926-27, 134; BAR, 1935-36, 97-98.

46. Resolutions reviewing the Reports on Working of the District Boards in Bengal, 1920-1 to 1934-35, Appdx. G. See also statistical tables in Gallagher, 282-83.

47. Gallagher, 286.

48. Ibid, 284-85. There were twenty-six District Boards in Bengal during the period under study with 696 members, 448 elected and 248 nominated, on them in 1935-36. The total receipts of these boards in the same year was Rs. 17.8 million. BAR, 1935-36, 99.

those from eastern Bengal where they had formed only thirty-four per cent. of the population with no prospect of reversing these results in the future, even wondered aloud if their dogmatic adherence to joint electorates as a matter of principle was worth the high price they were paying in return. For instance, the results of the Chittagong Sadar Local Board election in 1927, in which Muslims had won all the elective seats with the pattern recurring in many other districts of Chittagong and Dacca divisions,⁴⁹ had led the writer of the 'Political Notes' column in the Statesman, a Bengali Hindu, to question the wisdom of continuing with joint electorates in view of these alarmingly disappointing election results in local bodies.⁵⁰ He had also warned the protagonists of joint electorates to heed these disastrous results

49. 'Political Notes' Statesman, 2 July 1927. The results of local board elections in Bakerganj district in 1931 had also demonstrated the continuing trend of Hindu electoral losses, Ibid., 11 September, 1931.

| Local Board | Total no. of seats | Elected members | | Nominated members | | Total No. of Hindu members | % of Hindu members |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------|-------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| | | Hindu | Muslim | Hindu | Muslim | | |
| Bakerganj Sadar | 30 | 7 | 13 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 33.3 |
| Perojepur | 31 | 3 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 19.3 |
| Patuakhali | 18 | 1 | 11 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 22.2 |
| Bhola | 10 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 10.0 |

50. 'Political Notes', Ibid., 2 July, 1927.

before they expressed any further their demand for its introduction in councilar elections.⁵¹ There was, however, one consolation for Hindus. Muslim members, still inexperienced in the art of public administration and at the same time plagued by internal dissensions, failed to take any real advantage of their massive electoral gains, and Hindus had still retained the effective control of many of these local bodies, particularly of district boards. For instance, Muslim members, holding twenty-two⁵² of the thirty-three seats in Mymensingh District Board in 1927, were prevented by their internal squabbles from exercising effective control over that board.⁵³ Again in 1930, the elected Muslim chairman of this District Board, Khan Bahadur Muhammad Ismail, was⁵⁴ replaced by an appointed chairman, Khan Bahadur Sharfuddin, another Muslim, due to faction-fights amongst Muslim members who held over seventy-five per cent. of the District Board seats. It is worth noting that throughout this period Hindus kept control of the Dacca District Board,

51. Statesman, 2 July, 1927

52. This accounted for all the twenty-two elective seats on the Mymensingh District Board, Hindus having failed to win any of these seats. All the eleven nominated members were, however, selected from the Hindu community. Statesman, 10 April, 1927; Gallagher, 284-85.

53. FR, March (2), 1927.

54. B.L.C.P., 1927, XXXIV.1., 186.

although their majority of seventy-three per cent. on the board in 1922-23 had reduced to fifty-four per cent. in 1934-35.⁵⁵

Now, to revert to council elections, here the bhadralok did not face any competition from the members of the depressed classes who, having secured representation⁵⁶ by nomination, did not generally contest these elections except for one or two seats in Midnapur district,⁵⁷ their strongest hold in the province, and that too as candidates of the Congress party and so by bhadralok consent. The latter, however, in any case stood a better chance of electoral success on account of their high social position, long rent-roll and purse, benefactions and powerful rural connections through superior ryots, who, as village headmen and principal creditors-cum-employers, controlled the countryside. There were, doubtless, occasional breakdown in the relationship between zamindars, most of whom were absentee landlords, and jotedars; but such ruptures were in most cases only partial and did not spread beyond the local boundaries of the places of dispute.⁵⁸ In ordinary circumstances, the relationship, of necessity, was one of collaboration rather than opposition, as the interests of the two were inter-twined.

55. Reports on working of the District Boards in Bengal, 1920-1 to 1934-35, Appendix G.

56. They were, however, not content with mere one seat so assigned to them in a House of 140.

57. See PP. 1921, XXVI, cmd. 1261(1921); PP, 1924, XVIII, cmd. 2154 (1924); The lists of members of the council too reveal this.

58. Rajat and Ratna Ray, 97.

Besides these, both Hindu and Muslim politicians had found out an easier and cheaper means of winning uncontested elections by their pre-poll manoeuvre of inducing weaker rivals to retire from contest prematurely, a tactic that they had mastered over the years. Thus of the forty-six Hindu members returnable from the Non-Muhammadan constituencies, six returned unopposed in 1920,⁵⁹ four in 1923,⁶⁰ nine in 1926,⁶¹ and twenty-seven or over half of them in 1929.⁶² The economics of elections and the uncertainty of its outcome seemed to have been the prime consideration in a candidate's pulling out of a contest honourably while there was still time rather than facing the grim prospect of a humiliating defeat after spending energy and money on it.⁶³ Elections were after all expensive affairs. Besides a cash deposit⁶⁴ of Rs. 250, which was liable to forfeiture on a candidate's failure to secure one-eighth of the votes polled,⁶⁵ each election in a general constituency cost a

59. PP. 1921, XXVI, cmd. 1261 (1921), 4

60. PP. 1924, XVIII, cmd. 2154 (1924), 4

61. PP. 1927, XVIII, cmd. 2923 (1927), 4

62. PP. 1930-31, XXIV, cmd. 3922 (1931), 4

63. There were also occasional instances of offer of inducement money for securing withdrawal of rival candidates and in 1926 one election was set aside for such corrupt practices. Simon Commission, VIII, 147.

64. This rule was first introduced in 1923 with the result that the number of candidates fell from 322 in 1920 to 280 in 1923, to 259 in 1926 and 175 in 1929. Ibid, 143; PP. 1930-31, XXIV, cmd. 3922 (1931), 4

65. 61 out of 225 candidates who had actually contested the election lost their deposits in 1923 and 50 out of 226 candidates did so in 1926. Simon Commission, VIII, 143.

candidate between two and five thousand rupees⁶⁶ which was a lot of money at that point of time; neither did it bring a successful candidate financial reward except travelling and daily allowances for attending council sessions.

Bhadralok electoral politics, as already noted, was not designed to extend their political base by a close rapport with the rural masses who, Hindus and Muslims together, formed in 1929 over eighty-eight per cent.⁶⁷ of the total electorate in Bengal electing sixty⁶⁸ per cent. of the elected members of the provincial legislature. The caste Hindu elite had rather deliberately avoided such a course lest it should unleash a demand for social levelling to the detriment of their own privileged position in society. They, however, could still count upon the electoral support of the rural voters by

66. Bengal Government reported that in 1923 one candidate used 120 and another 110 private motor cars and horse-drawn vehicles to transport voters to polling centres. Besides this candidates had also spent money on treating voters to light refreshment and on buying votes, although such practices were not widespread. *Simon Commission, VIII, 147, 150.*

67. The rural Hindu and Muslim voters together numbered 1,051,442 in 1929 against a total electorate of 1,186,428. The numbers of rural Hindu voters alone and their proportion to Hindu voters in all Non-Muhammadian constituencies and to the total electorate during the period were as follows:

| Year | No. of rural Hindu voters | No. of Hindu voters in all Non-Muhammadian constituencies | No. of total electorate | Proportion of rural Hindu voters to: | |
|------|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|------------------|
| | | | | Voters in Non-Muhammadian constituencies | Total electorate |
| 1920 | 473,898 | 541,189 | 1,021,418 | 87.56 | 46.39 |
| 1923 | 485,791 | 557,914 | 1,044,166 | 87.07 | 46.52 |
| 1926 | 537,595 | 623,217 | 1,184,784 | 86.26 | 45.37 |
| 1929 | 537,606 | 626,231 | 1,186,428 | 85.84 | 45.31 |

virtue of their dominant social position and economic power which together formed the mainstay of the mechanics of rural control. A few complaining voices which were then being raised by a small counter elite of newly educated low caste Hindus such as the Namasudras of eastern Bengal against high caste domination seemed to have had no impact on the election results which throughout the 1920's were decided overwhelmingly in the bhadralok's favour. The bhadralok hold on the rural voters was clearly demonstrated in 1923 when both the President and the Vice President of the Bengal Namasudra Association, Mukunda Bihari Mallick and Nirode Bihari Mallick, two brothers, fighting council elections from Khulna and Bakerganj districts, two Namasudra strongholds, were soundly defeated by two high caste Hindus.⁶⁹ One of the principal factors contributing to bhadralok electoral success was probably the general apathy of the Bengali masses to politics, which had splendidly suited bhadralok's purpose. The bhadralok had, however, successfully

Compiled from PP, 1921, XXVI, cmd. 1261 (1921), 10-13; PP. 1924, XXVIII, cmd. 2154 (1924), 25-36; PP. 1927, XVIII, cmd. 2923 (1927), 14-16; PP. 1930-31, XXIV, cmd. 3922 (1931), 16-18.

68. Of 114 elected members of the Bengal Legislative Council, 68, 35 Hindus and 33 Muslims were returned from rural constituencies.
69. PP, 1924, XVIII, cmd. 2154 (1924), 28-29. Mukunda Bihari Mallick came third among three candidates contesting in Khulna Non-Muhammadan constituency in 1923, securing 2149 of 9732 votes polled out of a total electorate of 21,403. The victorious candidate, Sailaja Nath Roy Chaudhuri, a Swarajya party candidate, was a local high caste Hindu landlord. Much worse was

exploited local grievances in particular areas at times of their political offensives against the foreign government, as they did during the Non-Cooperation movement. One will, however, err dangerously to take such instances as an indication of political awareness of the masses who rather saw in such elections a momentary break in their dull and joyless life. In fact, they did not understand the complex political vocabulary of the bhadralok. Nor did they bother to know what these elections were actually about except that they were sending some of their patrons to do some important work, the real purport of which was a closed book to them. Many of them probably looked on an election as an occasion for a free joy-ride in transport provided by candidates, to the polling centre where, as an extra bonus, they often had a social get-together with friends and relatives.

Council membership, which was monopolised by the urban elite, had, on the other hand, yet involved little or no constituency work at all. So the ^{M.L.C.'s} readily forgot their constituents and the countryside as soon as the election, which came once in three years, was over, and they concentrated wholly upon Calcutta, their traditional and safe power base,⁷⁰ which

Mallick's performance in Faridpur south Non-Muhammadan constituency, an area with a high concentration of Namasudras, his own caste-men, from where he had contested simultaneously. Of the five candidates, he polled, the lowest number of votes--a meagre 376 of 5260 actually polled, the total electorate numbering 14,273. Once again the victor was a Swarajya party candidate, a Mohini Mohan Das who had secured 3,117 votes. On the other hand, in a two-men contest in

by comparison offered them much larger powers and patronage than did the districts. Calcutta was not only the metropolis but also the chief educational and commercial centre of the province setting the cultural and economic pattern for the educated, professional and commercial classes throughout Bengal. All roads, whether of higher education, employment or of political or commercial manipulation led to Calcutta, although the bhadralok expectations of the city often proved excessive. Calcutta's hold on the hinterland was, nonetheless, overwhelming. It controlled the prices of crops through a chain of hierarchically ordered tradesmen stretching from the city to the remotest village mart. One such example was the artificial depressing of jute prices by speculation on jute futures⁷¹ at Calcutta's Bhitar Bazar.

Bakerganj South Non-Muhammadan constituency. Nirode Bihari Mallick was defeated by a local high caste zamindar, Satyendra Nath Roy Chaudhuri who had also the decoration of a Rai Bahadur.

70. Of Calcutta's 1,196,734 inhabitants in 1931, 822,293 i.e. 69% were Hindus. The social life and the politics of the city were, however, dominated by the members of the three high castes who with a population of 337,232 formed 41% of the city's Hindu population. Census of India, 1931, V, II, 116, 226, 229, 232.
71. Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, IV, 277, 282, 284-85, 289.

Bhadralok Calcutta-based exclusive politics had, however, some very serious consequences in as much as it created considerable differences and dissensions in their bhadralok ranks over the share of the city's spoils. This had engendered fierce faction fights over the control of the municipal administration of the city in the Calcutta Corporation and over that of the provincial Congress machine. The Swarajists had promptly seized control of the Corporation after it was reconstituted with a liberal constitution in 1924 under the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923,⁷² maintaining their firm hold on it throughout the period under review. The constitution, in keeping with the reforms of 1919, had largely relaxed the official preponderance on the Corporation ensuring an elected majority in an enlarged House. The number of municipal councillors, as the old municipal commissioners were redesignated, was raised from fifty,⁷³ half of whom were appointed by government and prominent commercial interests,

72. This replaced the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1899 which had reduced the elected element on the Corporation and entrusted its executive functions to a committee dominated by officials. This was the cause of much bickering between the Bengali elite and the government. See Chris Furedy, 'Lord Curzon and the Reform of the Calcutta Corporation, 1899: A case study in imperial decision-making in South Asia, I, I, March, 1978, 75-87.

73. Under the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1899, the Corporation was composed of 25 elected Ward Commissioners, 15 Commissioners appointed by Government, and 10 Commissioners appointed by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Calcutta Trades Association and by the Port Commissioners.

to eighty-five⁷⁴ with nine-tenth of them elected triennially by tax payers who had too come to enjoy extended franchise⁷⁵ under the new constitution. The councillors in turn elected five aldermen from persons other than themselves. The councillors and the aldermen together then elected annually a mayor, usually from amongst the aldermen, and a deputy mayor in places of the official chairman and deputy chairman at the head of the corporation. The mayor was to preside over the meetings of the corporation as its nominal head, and the executive powers exercised by the chairman under the old law were now entrusted to a new officer, ~~that of~~ ^{the} Chief Executive Officer⁷⁶ who was appointed by the corporation subject to the approval of government. But, the mayor, in

74. These eighty-five councillors were 48 elected from non-Muhammadan constituencies, 15 elected from Muhammadan constituencies (on the basis of separate electorates), 6 elected by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, 4 elected by the Calcutta Trades Association, 2 by the Port Commissioners, and 10 councillors were appointed by ^{the} government.
75. The Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923 had fixed the franchise qualification as the payment of Rs. 12 in municipal rates by hut owners in a bustee. Under the old rule, the franchise was limited to male adult residents of the city owning and occupying immovable properties valued Rs. 150 a year for assessment purposes, or, either owning or occupying such properties which were valued Rs. 300/- a year for assessment purposes. Besides them, traders and professional men paying a license-fee of Rs. 25 a year or persons paying Rs. 24 in municipal taxes were enrolled as voters of the corporation. In 1927 when the second general election to the Corporation was held the municipal voters numbered 67,079.
76. His position and powers were more or less analogous to that of a Town Clerk in England.

fact, had often overstepped⁷⁷ his jurisdiction encroaching on the powers of the Chief Executive Officer whose authority was also undermined by the interference of individual councillors.⁷⁸ Thus the Swarajists became the absolute masters of their house in the corporation, notwithstanding some powers of control retained by government on it in matters relating to certain appointments, contracts, loans and audits,⁷⁹ which however, it rarely exercised,⁸⁰ This had more than compensated what the Swarajists had lost by refusing to become government ministers whose hands, under the dyarchy, were rather tight in many respects compared to the wide range of powers and privileges the Swarajists enjoyed in the corporation. Presiding over an institution with an annual revenue of twenty-two million rupees in 1925-26,⁸¹ this amount rising to

77. Simon Commission, VIII, 68.

78. Ibid, 69; BAR, 1935-36, XII.

79. The appointment of permanent officers like Chief Engineer, Health Officer, besides that of Chief Executive Officer, required the vetting of government. So did the works and contracts involving an expenditure of over Rs. 250 thousand and also the raising of loans. Loans exceeding Rs. 2.5 million required the sanction of the Government of India. Simon Commission, VIII, 69-70.

80. Simon Commission, VIII, 69-70.

81. This accounted for income taking assets and liabilities together, Report on the Municipal Administration of Calcutta (hereinafter C.M.A.R.), 1925-26, II,i; B.A.R. 1926-27, 123.

twenty-four and a half million ruppes in 1930-31,⁸² and with extensive patronage in the form of contracts of work and supplies, building and business licences, tax remission and appointment, they had commanded strong enough powers to harass enemies and reward friends. The control of the corporation thus meant an accession of financial and strategic power. For instance, the corporation issued over seventy-eight thousand⁸³ licences of various kinds in 1925-26 and nearly ninety-two thousand in 1930-31⁸⁴ for a total fee of Rs. 1.94 million⁸⁵ and Rs. 1.98⁸⁶ million respectively. On the other hand, Rs. 730 thousand, forming 4% of the gross demands of rates, fell in arrear in 1927-28.⁸⁷ This amount rose to Rs. 2.96 million in 1920-31, Rs. 3 million in 1932-33⁸⁸

82. C.M.A.R., 1930-31, II, i; B.A.R., 1930-31, 41

Statistics showing the increasing financial power of the corporation:

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Income</u> Rs. | <u>Expenditure</u> Rs. |
|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1926-27 | 21,684,402 | 20,856,542 |
| 1930-31 | 24,504,957 | 23,547,266 |
| 1935-36 | 23,779,993 | 24,964,794 |

Compiled from C.M.A.R., 1926-27, II, i; Ibid, 1930-31, II, i; Ibid, 1935-36, II, i; B.A.R. 1926-27, 127; Ibid, 1930-31, 41; Ibid, 1935-36, 75.

83. C.M.A.R., 1925-26, 1, Appendix F, Table III.

84. B.A.R., 1930-31, 42; C.M.A.R., 1930-31, I, Appendix F, Table III, 52.

85. B.A.R., 1925-26, 124; C.M.A.R., 1925-26, I, Appendix F, Table I, 51.

86. B.A.R., 1930-31, 42; C.M.A.R., 1930-31, I, Appendix F, Table I, 51.

87. B.A.R., 1927-28, 126; C.M.A.R., 1927-28, 1, Appendix D, 48. Gross demands included arrears of of the previous years.

and Rs.4.4 millinn in 1935-36,⁸⁹ in each case the arrear forming 14% of the gross demand.⁹⁰ The figure of arrears each year was inflated by the accumulated balance of the previous years, and the collection of the corporation naturally suffered during the slump of the early 1930's raising the proportion of arrears to gross demand still higher. But it must also be noted here that the defaulters also included many municipal councillors and wealthy and influential men of the city, who had misused their position in withholding payment of municipal rates.⁹¹ The corporation had also catered for a large number of clerical and teaching jobs. It employed 513 primary school teachers in 1926-27,⁹² 986 in 1931-32⁹³ and 1086 teachers in 1935-36.⁹⁴ Congressmen dominating the

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88. B.A.R., 1932-33, 59; C.M.A.R., 1932-33, Appendix E, 46-47.
 89. B.A.R., 1935-36, XI, 77; C.M.A.R., 1935-36, Appendix E, 46-47.
 90. The arrear formed only one per cent. of the gross demand in 1914-15 when the corporation was under official control.
 91. Simon Commission, XV, 373.
 92. C.M.A.R., 1926-27, I, 87; B.A.R., 1926-27, 132.
 93. C.M.A.R., 1931-32, I, 125; B.A.R., 1931-32, 46.
 94. C.M.A.R., 1935-36, I, 123; B.A.R., 1935-36, 83.

Total expenditure on education of the corporation,
 number of primary schools and pupils therein:

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Total expenditure on education</u> | <u>No. of primary schools</u> | <u>No. of pupils</u> |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1926-27 | Rs.4,46,018 | 140 | 16,649 |
| 1931-32 | Rs.11,68,753 | 229 | 30,064 |
| 1935-36 | Rs.17,15,000 | 227 | 33,038 |

corporation during this period utilised these appointments to reward their personal and faction supporters to consolidate their position.⁹⁵

The corporation had thus become a lever for power and the hot-bed of congress politics. Each election to it since 1927 was marked by bitter faction-fights amongst congressmen for the control of this body. The congress politicians of Calcutta seemed to have valued the control of the corporation even more than that of the congress party or tenaciously following its national programme. For instance, the presidency of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (B.P.C.C.) was practically going 'abegging'⁹⁶ early in 1927 when ^{the} city congressmen had concentrated all their attention and efforts upon the corporation election.⁹⁷ All the four District Congress Committees (D.C.C.) of Calcutta,⁹⁸ claiming for themselves the sole right of nominating candidates for the municipal

95. Sir John Anderson (Governor of Bengal) to Viscount Templewood (Secretary of State for India), 10 December 1932. Templewood Collection, Eur. E.240, 90.

96. Statesman, 23 January, 1927.

97. Ibid. The B.A.R. for 1926-27, commenting on the Congress infight in the corporation election wrote, "Higher politics for the moment were forgotten. Government and the ministry were left alone." B.A.R., 1926-27, 9.

98. The B.P.C.C. had divided Calcutta into four districts --North, South, Central Calcutta and Burrha Bazar D.C.C's.

election, had drawn up a panel of candidates of their own and contested the election independently of the B. P. C. C.⁹⁹ winning forty¹⁰⁰ of the forty-eight seats¹⁰¹ reserved for Non-Muhammadan on the corporation, B. P. C. C. candidates having won only eight¹⁰² seats. The Calcutta DCC's, besides enjoying the blessings of the All India Congress Committee (A. I. C. C.) which had authorised¹⁰³ the DCC's to form a corporation election board thus enabling them to assert themselves in the affairs of the corporation for the first time in 1927, had behind them also the full weight of several powerful congress groups in the city. The congress faction led by Jatindra Mohan SenGupta¹⁰⁴ who himself was the President of the DCC's election board; the Karmi Sangha or the

99. Statesman, 25 and 26 February, 1927.

100. Ibid, 12 April, 1927.

101. In a house of 90 consisting of 85 councillors and 5 aldermen.

102. Statesman, 12 April, 1927.

103. Ibid., 25 February, 1927; B.A.R., 1926-27, 9. The A. I. C. C. had intervened on the complaint of congress groups opposed to the group then in office in the B. P. C. C.

104. Jatindra Mohan SenGupta (1885-1933), Brahmo, came of a well to do Baidya family of Chittagong district. His father was an influential man in the Chittagong town with a prosperous law practice in the district court. A Cambridge Arts and Law graduate as well as a Bar-at-Law from Gray's Inn, J. M. SenGupta was also the President of India Majlis, an Indian Students' association in Cambridge, which Viscount Templewood had once described as a veritable lion's den. On his return to India, SenGupta had joined the Calcutta High Court Bar soon establishing himself as

revolutionaries dominated congress Workers' Association, a powerful group in the Bengal Congress Party, besides the Calcutta Big Five,¹⁰⁵ a powerful combination of five men of great possessions and influence had their full backing behind the Calcutta DCC's in this regard. These Big Five were Tulsi Charan Goswami,¹⁰⁶ a big zamindar and a Barrister

one of the leading lawyers of the city. He joined Congress politics in 1911 making his name during the Non-Cooperation movement when he had given up his lucrative law practice and led the Assam Bengal Railway strike as the president of the hurriedly formed Railway Employee's Union. He was made the Secretary of the Bengal Swarajya party in 1923 as a right-hand man of Chittoranjana Das whom he had succeeded as the President of the B. P. C. C., leader of the Council Congress Party and the Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation, having held the last named office for five terms. He was also a member of the Congress Working Committee, the executive committee of the All India Congress, for several years. D. N. B., IV, 126-27. Tushar Kanti Ghose (ed.) Deshapriya Jotindra Mohan: His Life and Work.

105. This label was given to them by Priyanath Gupta, a columnist of the Statesman, in 1926 when after the death of Chittoranjana Das, they together emerged as the most powerful group in the Bengal Congress Party.
106. Tulsi Charan Goswami (1898-1957), Brahmin, entered public life during the Non-Cooperation movement of 1921-22 giving up the law practice he had just started in the Calcutta High Court as an England-returned young Barrister. A brain-trust and financier of the Swarajya party, he also edited for some time its mouth piece, the Forward, an English-language daily newspaper started in 1923, of which he was also an owner-director. Sir Stanley Jackson, the Governor of Bengal (1927-32), described Goswami in 1927 as a moderate but 'very proud' nationalist leader with 'an acute politician's brain' who 'lives for politics and devotes his ability and money' for the Swarajya Party. Goswami represented Bengal in the Indian Legislative Assembly in 1923. He was also returned to the Bengal

with rich interest in jute trade; Sarat Chandra Bose,¹⁰⁷ a leading member of the Calcutta Bar; Nirmal Chandra Chunder,¹⁰⁸ a wealthy solicitor and a leading member of the Calcutta Kayasth society, a caste association; Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy,¹⁰⁹ a prominent medical man with industrial connection; Nalini

Legislative Assembly under the Government of India Act, 1935 to become the Finance Minister in the Nazimuddin Ministry in 1943. Opposed to the partition of Bengal in 1947, he left the Congress party. Goswami retired from politics following his defeat in the provincial election in 1952. A graduate of Oxford University, Goswami was a man of wide intellectual interests, well-versed in contemporary European Mathematical Philosophy, a fluent speaker in French and German and a brilliant parliamentary performer in English. D.N.B., II, 87-88, Sir Stanley Jackson to Lord Birkenhead, 17 May, 27. MSS. Eur.D. 703, 21.

107. Sarat Chandra Bose (1889-1950), Kayasth, was an elder brother of Subhas Chandra Bose. He joined politics under Chittoranjnan Das' leadership, having represented Calcutta University Constituency in the Bengal Legislative Council from 1926 to 1929. From 1937 to 1939 he was a member of the Congress Working Committee. He was also the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the Bengal Legislative Assembly under the 1935 Act. He was a member of the interim government of India formed in 1946. He, however, resigned his post soon to form his own party, socialist Republican Party, in cooperation with H.S. Suhrawardy in pursuance of the objective of greater Bengal, i. e. an undivided Bengal outside India and Pakistan, which, however, proved abortive. In 1949, he won a resounding victory over a Congress party candidate in the election to the West Bengal State Assembly. He was closely associated with the Forward and the Advance, two English language newspapers. D.N.B., I, 223-24.
108. N. C. Chunder (1885-1953) came of a wealthy and influential Kayasth family. Both his father and grand father served several terms as municipal commissioners on the Calcutta Corporation, and also as Deputy Sheriff of Calcutta. His grand father, who was a member of the prestigious British Indian Association, had also served as a member of the Bengal Legislative Council.

Ranjan Sarkar,¹¹⁰ a successful businessman who had made his pile in insurance. The Big Five had dominated the Bengal Congress playing the role of king-maker for some time after

under the Indian Council Act, 1861. N.C. Chunder, a solicitor, representing the family law firm founded by his great grandfather, entered public life as a commissioner of the Calcutta Corporation in 1915, ending it with the mayoralty in 1953. He was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council in 1923 and to the Indian Legislative Assembly in 1926 on the ticket of the Swarajya party with which he was intimately associated since its foundation. He held the office of the President, B.P.C.C. for a short while in 1931. In 1935, he became a member of the A.I.C.C. a position he had soon vacated in protest against the Congress party's ambivalent attitude to the question of Communal Award. He then joined the erstwhile Congress Nationalist party, which had spear-headed opposition to the Award, and he was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1936 on the ticket of this party. D.N.B. I, 319.

109. Dr. B. C. Roy (1882-1962), Brahmo (originally Kayasth), claimed descent from the house of Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore, a 16th century local chieftain of Bengal, although his family had inherited none of the riches or political or social authority of their ancestors. His father was a provincial civil servant and retired as a deputy magistrate. An M.D. of Calcutta University and an M.R.C.P. and F.R.C.S. from Great Britain, Dr. B. C. Roy taught medicine first at the state-managed Campbell Medical School, Calcutta, and then at the government aided Carmichael Medical College (now R.G. Kar Medical College), the latter having grown into a big institution from a humble nationalist enterprise. He made his political debut while still teaching at Carmichael Medical College by defeating Surendranath Banerjee, a veteran politician, at the election of the Bengal Legislative Council in 1923. After the death of Chittoranjan Das when leadership of the council Swarajya party had passed on to J. M. SenGupta, Dr. Roy became its deputy leader. In 1928, he found a place on the A.I.C.C. and in 1930 on the Congress Working party. By then he had earned the confidence of Gandhi, the All-India Congress leader, and of the Congress High Command. He was elected the Mayor of Calcutta Corporation in 1931 and 1932. In 1934, he became the President of the B.P.C.C. From 1942 to 1944 he was the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. Early in

the death of Chittoranjnan Das, although by the close of the 1920's they had become a group more in name than in fact. The tussle between the Calcutta D.C.C's and the B.P.C.C. over the right of nominating candidates in the Corporation

1948, he became the Chief Minister of West Bengal replacing P.C. Ghose, and he held this office till his death in 1962. D.N.B., III, 532-534; K.P. Thomas, Dr. B.C. Roy.

110. N.R. Sarkar (1885-1953) came of a middle class Kayasth family of Mymensingh district. Unlike the others of the Big Five, he had little formal education which did not go beyond the passing of the Entrance (Matriculation) Examination. Financially hard up, he entered the service of the Hindustan Cooperative Insurance Society Ltd. in an humble position from where he later rose to the position of its General Manager as also that of its President. He had successfully sponsored several other groups of industrial and business concern like general insurance, building society, glass works and heavy chemicals. His success in business had in turn opened his career to politics. In 1923, he was elected to the Bengal legislature on the ticket of the Swarajya party, a position he held till early in 1930 when Congress members had withdrawn from the legislature in pursuance of an A.I.C.C. directive. He was also appointed the Chief Whip of the parliamentary Swarajya party. In 1935, he became the Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation. Having served as a minister in the Bengal Government under the 1935 Act, Sarkar became the finance minister in the West Bengal Government in 1948 and officiated a Chief Minister for a few months in 1949. He retired from politics in 1952. D.N.B., IV, 71-72; Statesman, 26 January, 1953.

election had become a regular feature of the Calcutta municipal politics during the period, clearly as an extension of the politics of power in the B.P.C.C. The Congress faction or factions controlling the B.P.C.C. and others out of it, the latter finding a convenient shelter behind the Calcutta D.C.C's, made each corporation election since 1927 a trial of strength between themselves. Thus early in 1930, J. M. SenGupta and his supporters, who had meanwhile lost the control of the B.P.C.C. to the Subhas Bose¹¹¹ faction, fought the B.P.C.C.

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111. Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945) came of a middle class Kayasth family of 24-Parganas district. His father, Janaki Nath Bose, a lawyer, had settled in Cuttack, the capital of Orissa, where he held the offices of Public Prosecutor and municipal Chairman, besides being a member of the Bengal Legislative Council from 1912 to 1915. Two of Subhas' elder brothers, Satish Chandra Bose and Sarat Chandra Bose, were also distinguished lawyers who also made their way into the Bengal legislature in the 1920's and 1930's, the latter playing a major role in Bengal politics even after independence.

Subhas Bose, a first-class honours graduate in philosophy of Calcutta University was also a first-class Tripos in Moral Science from Cambridge, joined congress politics of the extremist variety during the Non-Cooperation movement of 1921-22 by resigning from the coveted Indian Civil Service which he had entered in 1920, standing fourth in the open competitive examination and securing the top marks in the English composition paper. Back in India in July, 1921, Bose served a period of political apprenticeship under C.R. Das, Bose's political and moral mentor, as the principal of the newly-founded Congress National College in Calcutta; as the Publicity Secretary of the Bengal Congress and as the editor of the Banglār Kathā, Das' newly-started daily Bengali-language newspaper before he became the Secretary of the B.P.C.C. in 1923 and the first Chief Executive Officer of the re-constituted Calcutta Corporation in 1924. Later he headed the B.P.C.C. from 1928 to 1931 and in 1939. He worked his way to the Presidency of the all-India Congress in 1938 and in 1939. Bose's following in

candidates in the corporation election on behalf of the Calcutta D. C. Cs.¹¹² So obsessed were the Calcutta Congress leaders with their intrigues over the corporation that they had practically subordinated all their activity, including the all-important salt Satyagraha of 1930 to the corporation election.¹¹³ It is, however, important to note that this election did not involve

India, however, came principally from his own Forward Bloc Party which was organised on authoritarian lines while his glamour sprung largely from his exploits with the pro-Japanese Indian National Army in South East Asia during World War II.

In politics, Bose was an uncompromising militant. He made no secret of his admiration of totalitarianism in his book, The Indian Struggle. He rejected democracy in favour of a woolly admixture of Socialist and Fascist ideology. While his patriotism was never open to question, his political solution for India lacked clarity. Nevertheless, he was a most compelling personality, and his charisma for younger and more impatient generations in India transcended communal and linguistic barriers. S. C. Bose, The Mission of Life; The Indian Struggle; DasGupta, Subhas Chandra; Hugh Toye, The Springing Tiger; D.N.B. I, 226-30.

112. Statesman ('Political Note' column), 5 March, 1930; F.R., February (1) and (2), 1930.

113. F.R., February (1) 1930 and March (1), 1930.

any contest in the Non-Muhammadan constituencies but for a dozen or so¹¹⁴ of a total of forty-eight seats. Even rebukes from the local press and the Congress high command¹¹⁵ failed to have a sobering effect on the quarelling Congress leaders.

The faction feud in the Bengal Congress revived late in 1931 when in September that year, J.M.SenGupta, the principal of one of the two major congress factions, offered to contest a Corporation byelection as a candidate of the North Calcutta D.C.C. against an official B.P.C.C. rival. Ultimately, however, no contest took place at all. SenGupta had an easy walkover over his opponent as certain errors and irregularities found in the nomination papers of the latter had automatically invalidated his candidature in the contest.¹¹⁶ This had also, doubtless, taken off much of the election fever which was just beginning to build up cutting short the public mud-slinging among the two rival candidates and their supporters—a very familiar spectacle in electioneering in Bengal at that time. Some moves in that direction had already been taken by SenGupta and his supporters. Soon after the announcement

114. Statesman, 5 March, 1930.

115. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the All-India Congress for 1930 in a rebuttal to the B.P.C.C. - Secretary stated that when everywhere in India all political efforts were directed towards making the Congress' programme of civil disobedience a success, the Congressmen in Calcutta were locked in a shameful quarrel over the municipal election. See J.Nehru to Secretary, B.P.C.C., 7 March, 1930, A.I.C.C. file G.120/186 of 1930, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, quoted in Gallagher, 278.

116. Statesman, 5 and 16 September, 1931.

of the nomination of SenGupta by the North Calcutta D. C. C. to fight the Corporation byelection, about a score or so of his ardent supporters broke away from the B. P. C. C. - controlled Congress Municipal Association to form a separate organization of their own, the Congress Party of the Calcutta Corporation.¹¹⁷ SenGupta, himself a D. C. C. candidate opened his election campaign reiterating the claim that the Calcutta D. C. C's alone, and none else, had the exclusive right of nominating the Congress candidates in the corporation election. As a further offensive to the B. P. C. C. SenGupta took his election stand on the pledge of 'rescuing the Congress from the hands of the coterie inside the Calcutta Corporation',¹¹⁸ as a general part of his self-professed campaign of 'purifying',¹¹⁹ the Congress in Bengal. There was, however, really nothing pious in these apparently moralistic statements—which were no more than expression of political verbosity. None of the feuding Congress factions, in fact, kept a clean house, and such grandiloquent claims and counter claims formed only a too familiar aspect of electioneering in Bengal, which neither faction took very seriously. So, visibly unshaken by SenGupta's allegation, Dr B. C. Roy, the

117. Statesman, 5 and 10 September, 1931.

118. Ibid, 5 September, 1931.

119. Ibid.

Mayor in 1931 and also one of SenGupta's fiercest political opponents, while writing to Ballabhabhai Patel, the President of the All-India Congress in 1931, derided SenGupta's claim to purity saying that he knew very well as to 'what purity there was during the four years that SenGupta was the Mayor...'¹²⁰

This unseemly squabble among the warring Congress factions over the control of the Corporation as already told formed only a part of the wider^{and} intricate politics of power, characterising the provincial Congress itself since the death of C.R.Das. Factionalism, which seems to have been endemic in the Bengal society, particularly in Calcutta,¹²¹ had become deep-seated in the provincial Congress politics, especially after the death in 1925 of C.R.Das, the father figure in the Bengal Congress. J.M.SenGupta, one of Das' trusted lieutenants had succeeded the latter, with Gandhi's blessings, in all the three positions Das had held when he was alive—the Presidency of the Provincial Congress, the Mayoralty of the Calcutta Corporation and the leadership of the Swarajya party in the Bengal legislature. Although apparently this succession settlement, mainly the work of Gandhi¹²² who happened to be present in Bengal at that time, was reached unopposed, there

120. Dr.B.C.Roy to Ballabhabhai Patel, 7 September, 1931. AICC File P.15/379 of 1931, quoted in Gallagher, 290.

121. See S.N.Mukherjee, 'Daladali in Calcutta in the nineteenth century' in Modern Asian Studies, 9, I, 1975, 59-80.

122. Sarat Bose to Subhas Bose, 15 July 1925, in Sisir K.Bose (ed.) Subhas Chandra Bose: Correspondence (henceforth Correspondence), 58.

were, however, many who strongly resented in private the combining of all the three posts, particularly the most coveted post of the Presidency of the Bengal Congress in one single person. For instance, Sarat Chandra Bose, one of the Big-Five, conveying the news of this settlement to his younger brother, Subhas Chandra Bose, another of Das' would-be Dauphins then kept incarcerated in Burma, wrote ruefully that it was 'a great mistake to put any other man into all the places filled by Deshandhu'¹²³ or the 'friend of his country' as C.R. Das was affectionately called. This settlement, made in July, 1925, was not, rather it could not be, an enduring solution of the succession question to the B. P. C. C. - Presidency which had many a covetous eye fixed upon it. SenGupta had, however, held on to this office till the end of 1926. But the intrigues of the Karmi Sangha members, as SenGupta complained of these erstwhile allies of his, had by then made the Presidential chair so hot¹²⁴ for him that he would better not run for it¹²⁵ as election became due early in January, 1927. With no single group commanding a working majority in the party, and an

123. Sarat Bose to Subhas Bose, 15 July, 1925, Correspondence, 58.

124. See SenGupta's allegation against the Karmi-Sangha members at a B. P. C. C. meeting on 13 June, 1926. I. Q. R., 1926, I, 92. For the Karmi-Sangha reaction to SenGupta's allegation, see 'The Congress Karmi Sangha's Manifesto', dated 13 June, 1926, I. Q. R., 1926, I, 93-94 and statement of Satish Chandra Sarkar, officiating Secretary of the Sangha, of 7 August, 1926, I. Q. R., 1926, II, 42-44.

125. Statesman, 10 February, 1927; Das Gupta, Subhas Chandra, 94.

attempt to resolve the leadership crisis by installing Mrs. C.R. Das to the provincial Congress Presidency having also failed simultaneously by her refusal to be dragged into party squabbles,¹²⁶ there was, for a while, a stalemate in the situation. It was, however, not long before ^{that the} warring Congress factions returned to a flurry of activity following the stealing of a march on his opponents by B.N. Sasmal,¹²⁷ one of the ardent aspirants to the Congress-stewardship in Bengal, by the institution of an executive council¹²⁸ of the Bengal Congress with himself as its Secretary and Jitendralal Banerji, a Calcutta college teacher and a self-styled Republican Congressman, as its president. The Karmi Sangha, the Big Five and the SenGupta faction, not to be so out-elbowed by Sasmal and despite their many scores still left to be settled, jointly formed a rival committee with Akhil Chandra Dutt,

126. H. Das Gupta, 94; Statesman, 23 January, 1927.

127. Birendra Nath Sasmal (1881-1934), was the accredited leader of the rich agricultural and dominant Mahisya caste which in the caste-structure stood between the non-Brahmin upper castes and the lower castes. Many Mahisya, by virtue of their wealth and education, had entered the professions and gained the acceptance as bhadralok. Sasmal, a Barrister-at-law of Middle Temple, was a leading lawyer of Midnapur district and Calcutta High Court bars. With his chief claim to public name and fame resting on his role as the leader of the successful anti-union board agitation in Midnapur during the Non-Cooperation movement of 1921-22, Sasmal held the office of the Secretary of ^{the} B. P. C. C. in 1921, in 1926 and again briefly in 1927. He was the whip of the parliamentary Swarajya party under C.R. Das' leadership. His relation with the Swarajya party and C. R. Das became strained and he later severed connection with the party. D. N. B., IV, 80-81; DasGupta, 68-69 and 91.

128. Statesman, 23 January, 1927.

a lawyer and a Congress MLC from Tippera as the President and Dr. J.M. DasGupta, a Congress MLC from Calcutta as the Secretary.¹²⁹ The two rival committees existed side by side for some time till Sasmal, was obliged to dissolve his committee in June, 1927.¹³⁰

The infight in the Bengal Congress had, however, again flared up late in 1929, this time around the personalities of J.M.SenGupta and Subhas Chandra Bose. The latter's long incarceration away from Bengal in Burma, which had, as already noted, perforce kept him out of the leadership race after C.R.Das' death, endeared him all the more to many Congressmen, particularly to the young revolutionaries who had infiltrated in large numbers into the provincial Congress organization since the early 1920's. So after his release from detention in 1927, he was unanimously elected the President of the B.P.C.C.¹³¹ Meanwhile, still in jail, late in 1926 he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council¹³² from a Calcutta constituency against its sitting member, Jatindra Nath Basu (not related to each other) of the National Liberal League which the old moderate congressmen had forged themselves into following the loss of their control of

129. Statesman, 3 March, 1927.

130. Ibid., 17 June, 1927.

131. Subhas C. Bose, The Indian Struggle, 1920-1934, 165 fn; H. Das Gupta, 95.

132. The General Election to the provincial legislature was held in November, 1926. For Bose's own description of the election campaign made on his behalf, see The Indian Struggle, 161.

the B. P. C. C. to the extremists in 1917. The dispute between SenGupta and Bose, as indeed the whole contentious question of leadership raging ⁱⁿ the Bengal Congress since C. R. Das' death, apparently centred round a clash of personalities for power and patronage. In this race for influence and resources, the patrons regimented their clients into rival factions which jockeyed for position in the party hierarchy often contriving to make matters worse. In the leadership fight SenGupta was flanked by his own faction and the Khadi group a small but well-knit group of Bengal Gandhians, and Bose by the Big Five, the Karmi Sangha and a band of his personal followers who had formed themselves into a social service society, the Sevak Samity. Even from jail, Subhas Bose kept himself up to date with the country's politics, particularly with the political developments in Bengal mainly through correspondences with his brother, Sarat Bose.¹³³ He had also remained in close touch with Haricharan Bagchi and Anil Chandra Biswas, two trusted members of the Savak Samity, ensuring their finances through his brother.¹³⁴ In ensuring a stable political base for himself when in detention and away from Bengal he courted the support of the members of the Karmi Sangha meticulously avoiding any cause of friction with them. He would not run for the council election from the Burmese jail until he had the

133. See Correspondence. In it, letters exchanged between Sarat Bose and Subhas Bose invariably touched upon politics.

134. Ibid, 50-52, 58, 121-133.

categorical assurance from his brother, Sarat Bose, that his candidature had the blessings of the Karmi Sangha.¹³⁵

To turn to the personal factors accentuating the leadership dispute, SenGupta and Bose seemed to have lacked much warmth in their personal relationship. The reticence in their attitude to each other increased still further during Bose's long incarceration¹³⁶ in Burma when the two had completely lost touch with each other.¹³⁷ On the other hand, Bose while accepting SenGupta's succession to all the three

135. Subhas Bose to Sarat Bose, 13 August, 1926. Correspondence, 219. "I cannot even stand for the council or the Assembly, if the leaders of the Karmi Sangha view my candidature with displeasure".

136. This became apparent from a letter Subhas Bose had written to J. M. SenGupta early in 1927 requesting him to move the Bengal Government for Bose's transfer from the Rangoon Central Jail, where Bose was then detained, to any other jail in Burma on grounds of discourteous treatment by senior jail officials. What was remarkable about this letter was not its contents but its strictly formal nature. It was no ordinary letter but an official communication from the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation (Bose held this office at the time of his arrest in 1924 since when he was on leave without pay against this post) to its Mayor, beginning with Sir and ending with your most obedient servant. In contrast, Bose's letter to Pandit Motilal Nehru written on the same day and on the same subject had an unmistakably personal touch on it which began with Dear Panditji and ended with yours affectionately. See Correspondence, 333-335.

137. It is worth noting here that Correspondence, an anthology of 230 letters from and to Subhas Bose from 1924 to 1932, contains only one letter from Subhas Bose to SenGupta and none from the latter.

posts held by Das—the Mayoralty, the Presidency of the Bengal Congress and leadership of the Council Congress Party—as a fait accompli, could not probably help brooding over the fact that but for his incarceration his claim to office as Das' successor would not have gone by default. Bose also seemed unimpressed by the efforts of the Congress leadership in Bengal for the release or return to Bengal of Bose and other political prisoners from Bengal held in Burmese jails; he had even the feeling of having been left in the lurch during their imprisonment away from Bengal. So when in August, 1926, Sarat Bose had suggested in a letter to Subhas Bose, still in jail in Burma, that the latter should consider contesting the impending election to the provincial legislature from the North Calcutta constituency,¹³⁸ Subhas Bose wrote back sulkily to his brother that he had expected the suggestion to come from 'some other quarter',¹³⁹ meaning SenGupta. Again writing in July, 1927, two months after his release, to Santosh Kumar Basu, one of his staunch supporters and an influential member of the corporation, Subhas Bose made

138. Sarat Bose to Subhas Bose, 6 August, 1926, Correspondence, 214.

139. Subhas Bose to Sarat Bose, 7 August, 1926, ibid, 216. A week later Subhas Bose again wrote to Sarat Bose, "What guarantee is there that Kiran Babu (Kiron Sankar Roy) and company (i. e. ruling Congress faction in Bengal) would like me to stand? Up till now they have not shown any anxiety about having me." Subhas Bose to Sarat Bose, 13 August, 1926. Ibid, 219.

no secret of his feeling against SenGupta. Writing to S.K. Basu, Subhas Bose expressed a wish that one of his trusted workers, who had lost his job in the Corporation for alleged assault should be reinstated. Bose would not, however, approach SenGupta, the Mayor, 'being doubtful how far that would help.'¹⁴⁰

Besides the personality conflict there were also underlying differences in the ranks of the Congress party on the question of political strategy. One fundamental area of dispute ^{was} that that of accommodation with the Muslims. For instance, there was a simmering resentment in the Bengali Hindu community and within the provincial Congress party itself against the Bengal Pact ^{that} the Swarajists had reached with some Bengali Muslim leaders late in 1923.¹⁴¹ The pact, to the chagrin of the bhadralok, had promised ~~the~~ *Muslims*

140. Subhas Bose to S.K. Basu, 25 July, 1927, Correspondence, 371-72.

141. Discussions on the Hindu-Muslim pact had begun in September, 1923, although details were not settled till after the council elections in November that year. Meanwhile many Muslim candidates successfully fought the elections on the Swarajist label. The terms of the pact having settled, they were published on 18 December, 1923 over the signature of Subhas Chandra Bose, the Secretary of the B. P. C. C. The pact however failed to get the approval of the All-India Congress at its session at Coconda in December, 1923 on the ground that it might impede the prospect of a settlement on the national level later. It was, however, duly ratified at the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Sirajganj in June, 1924. The pact was, however, based on narrow and weak foundations and was not heard of after 1927. For details see A. Karim, Letters on Hindu-Muslim Pact, 2-3 and Appendix A.

proportional representation to all elective bodies¹⁴²
 including the legislature on the basis of separate electorates,
 and fifty-five per cent.¹⁴³ of all government posts to
 Muslims once provincial autonomy was achieved. This
 at once led to the grant of increased number of posts in
 the corporation, including the Deputy Mayoralty for H.S.
 Suhrawardy in 1924 and the Secretaryship of the Council
Swarajya party, which went to Abdur Rashid Khan.
 Apparently, the pact had given Muslims everything they
 could lay their hands on, and the entire Hindu press of
 Calcutta condemned it as pandering to Muslims at the
 expense of all legitimate Hindu rights and aspirations.¹⁴⁴
 So the aggrieved anti-pact elements made a determined
 bid after C. R. Das' death to get rid of this 'inequitious'
 settlement at the annual conference of the Bengal Congress
 at Krishnanagar in May, 1926.¹⁴⁵ The conference itself,
 coming after months of ~~savage~~ intercommunal rioting¹⁴⁶
 in Calcutta, was held in an atmosphere of great tension.
 Soon after the conference began its President, B. N. Sasmal

142. In the local bodies, the majority community was to have 60% of the seats and the minority community 40%.

143. Until that percentage was achieved the Muslim community would supply 80% of all recruits.

144. N. C. Banerji, 180.

145. See I.A.R. 1926, I, 417-421.

146. Simon Commission, VIII, 104-105.

who was then also the Secretary of the B.P.C.C., was hounded out of the conference rostrum in the middle of his Presidential speech by the anti-pact group for his espousal¹⁴⁷ of the Bengal Pact and for his condemnation of the terrorists who had ranged themselves on the side of the anti-pact forces. Then amid pandemonium the pact was rescinded¹⁴⁸ only to be restored later rather perfunctorily by the pro-pact group under J. M. SenGupta's leadership at a meeting¹⁴⁹ of the executive council of the B.P.C.C., which ruled that the entire proceedings nullifying the pact had been irregular and void. This was, however, tersely criticised by the Big Five¹⁵⁰ and the Karmi Sangha¹⁵¹ in separate press-statements. How deeply the Bengal Pact had divided the Hindu community becomes apparent from a letter of Sarat Bose to his brother, Subhas, still in jail in Burma, in which the former stated that it was not a question of whether but when the pact should go; and that if SenGupta still raised the cry of standing by the pact, he would 'come to grief.'¹⁵²

147. H. Das Gupta, 92.

148. I. Q. R., 1926, I, 421.

149. The meeting was held on 13 June, 1926.
Ibid., 89-90.

150. I. Q. R., 1926, I, 83-84.

151. Ibid., 93-94.

152. Sarat Bose to Subhas Bose, 21 June, 1926,
Correspondence, 195.

The contest between SenGupta and Bose for the control of the provincial congress reflected a strong difference of opinion on Gandhi's leadership at the centre and on the national strategy of the all-India Congress involving such matters as its political goal and its policy of accommodation with the Muslims. SenGupta, on whose shoulders the political mantle of C.R.Das came to rest, thanks largely to Gandhi's manoeuvres, naturally became the Mahatma's principal protege in Bengal. Bose was, however, sharply critical of what he described as SenGupta's 'unquestioning obedience'¹⁵³ to Gandhi and his policies. He saw himself as Das' true political heir: an assertive revolutionary nationalist leader¹⁵⁴ as opposed to the reformist and tame genre led by Gandhi.¹⁵⁵ Bose made no secret of his differences with Gandhi on vital policy matters or with the Congress High Command, whom he regarded as being of 'low intellectual' calibre.¹⁵⁶ As early as 1928 Bose, at the Calcutta Congress, had openly opposed Gandhi by insisting on the call for independence¹⁵⁷

153. S. C. Bose, The Indian Struggle, 172.

154. Ibid, 35, 53-55, 153-54, 202, 205 and passim.

155. For Bose's evaluation of Gandhi's political leadership see The Indian Struggle, 48, 61, 70, 111-15, 177-231, 293-98 and passim.

156. Ibid, 48, 61.

157. Bose's amendment was, however, lost by 973 votes to 1350 votes, even though two-thirds of the Bengali delegates supported the amendment. Reflecting on

instead of Dominion status moved by the latter on the basis of the Nehru Report,¹⁵⁸ SenGupta, needless to say, put his full weight behind Gandhi,¹⁵⁹ thus widening the breach with Bose and bringing the schism in the Bengal Congress out into the open.¹⁶⁰ Bose's intransigence on the question of independence; his military style of marching uniformed

the event a few years later Bose commented that the vote was far from free as many of the delegates were hoodwinked by Gandhi's supporters into believing that this was a question of confidence in Gandhi who would otherwise have retired from the Congress in the event of a defeat. Ibid, 157; I.A.R. 1928, II, 368; BAR, 1928-29, XI-XII; FR., December (2), 1928.

158. Report of the committee appointed by an all-parties conference in 1928 with Pandit Motilal Nehru as chairman to outline 'the principles of the constitution of India'. This was principally a Congress-inspired exercise as a rebuff to the all-British Indian Statutory Commission, better known after its chairman, as the Simon Commission, which was appointed by the British Government late in 1927 to enquire into the possibilities of further constitutional advance in India. The Nehru Committee had decided by a majority that the Indian constitution should be modelled on the Dominion constitutions with full responsible government at the centre and in the provinces. Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru, two members of the committee, however, dissented from the majority on the question of Dominion status, and they pressed for the acceptance of independence as the political goal of India. Among other things the Nehru Report recommended an unitary government, with the centre retaining the residuary powers; it also advocated adult franchise, the abolition of the separate electorates and reservation of seats where Muslims were in a majority and the end of 'weightage' where Muslims were in a minority. The Muslims, however, found these recommendations unacceptable to them and consequently dissociated themselves from the report.
159. The Indian Struggle, 172; NC. Banerji, 211; I.A.R. 1928, I, 101-2.
160. The Indian Struggle, 172.

Congress volunteers in a parade of strength at the conference were highly distasteful to Gandhi who afterwards described the Calcutta Congress as a Bertram Mills circus.¹⁶¹

These basic differences were again reflected at the Lahore Congress in 1929, where Bose, as¹⁶² spokesman of the Congress left wing, opposed Gandhi's programme of Civil Disobedience in favour of a more radical programme of parallel government,¹⁶² as his demand, he asserted, was more in accord¹⁶³ with the Congress' new goal of complete independence¹⁶⁴ now moved by Gandhi at the same Lahore Congress. Bose, however, lost the fight and with it his place on the Working Committee of the Congress¹⁶⁵

161. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, The Continent of Circe, 103-4; N. C. Banerji, 216.

162. The Indian Struggle, 174; Statesman, 29 December, 1929 and 1 January, 1930. Subhas Bose's amendment had also called for the need to organise the country's workers, peasants and youth; FR, December (2), 1929.

163. The Indian Struggle, 174; Statesman, 29 December, 1929.

164. The Calcutta Congress of 1928, while adopting Dominion Status as its goal, made it conditional upon the acceptance by the British Government before the end of 1929 of the Nehru Report in its entirety as the basis of the future constitution of India. There being no encouraging response from the British Government, Gandhi himself moved, at the Lahore conference, a motion defining complete independence as the Congress' goal and recommending Civil Disobedience as the appropriate mode of political action towards that end. Statesman, 1 January, 1930; J. Brown, Gandhi and Civil Disobedience, 78-79; I.A.R., 1929, II, 302-304.

165. Statesman, 3 January, 1930; The Indian Struggle, 174.

In the debate, the Mahatma got the valuable support of J. M. SenGupta who hammered home the point that Gandhi's motion went as far as it could go; that his leadership was indispensable to the Congress and the country, and that his resolution should therefore be carried.¹⁶⁶

The Lahore Congress was unable to steer past the domestic problems of the Bengal Congress. ~~Shortly~~ before this Congress was convened, the B. P. C. C. had held fresh elections of its delegates to the A. I. C. C., the majority of whom, predictably, came from the ruling Bose-faction. SenGupta and his followers, true to form, disputed these elections winning an interim stay order from the Congress central Working Committee which ruled that pending a settlement of the dispute, Bengal should be represented in the A. I. C. C. and the Congress subject committee by her existing members.¹⁶⁷ At Lahore, Subhas Bose protested against this decision, describing it as 'arbitrary and unconstitutional', and being unduly influenced by the

166. Statesman, 1 January, 1930; I.A.R., 1929, II, 306

The conflict between Gandhi and Bose continued through the 1930's: in 1931 Bose criticised Gandhi-Irwin Pact; in 1933 he was strongly critical of Gandhi's decision to call off the civil disobedience campaign. The climax to this struggle came in 1939 when Bose resigned from the Presidency of the Congress at its Tripuri session and was expelled from the organization in the following year. Bose thereafter organised his own political party, the Forward Bloc.

167. Thomas, 145-46; Statesman, 28 December, 1929; I.A.R., 1929, II, 284-86,

representation of SenGupta and his faction.¹⁶⁸ To bring pressure to bear upon the Working Committee, Subhas Bose resigned from the A. I. C. C. along with twenty-four other members from Bengal.¹⁶⁹ The tangle was finally resolved by the extra-ordinary measure of admitting all thirty-eight¹⁷⁰ delegates from Bengal present at Lahore to the A. I. C. C. as its members. The somewhat circular logic put forward in justification was that although this number had exceeded by six the old quota of A. I. C. C. members from Bengal it still remained below the new quota of forty-eight seats for Bengal on the A. I. C. C. just agreed upon at Lahore.¹⁷¹

The dispute over the B. P. C. C. election itself, now a chronic problem, proved more difficult to resolve than the Bengal imbroglio over the A. I. C. C. elections. Here the rival factions, backed by their vocal supporters, were engaged in a wordy battle of nerves. With the time for elections to the D. C. C's and the B. P. C. C. drawing near late in 1929, the SenGuptaites, long impatient to enter the charmed fence of power in the party organisation, opened their campaign accusing the Boseite-controlled B. P. C. C. executive of turning the Congress into an instrument of the

168. Statesman, 28 December, 1929; I.A.R., 1929, II, 284.

169. Statesman, 28 December, 1929.

170. Ibid., 29 December, 1929; Thomas, 145-46.

171. Statesman, 29 December, 1929; Thomas, 145-46.

hated coterie rule of a Calcutta caucus¹⁷² They brought still more serious charges against the ruling Bose faction in 1931: accusing them of malpractice in the enrolment of new party members;¹⁷³ of dishonestly starving the SenGupta faction of membership forms,¹⁷⁴ thus depriving many of their supporters from becoming party members; and of extreme partisanship¹⁷⁵ in the appointment of returning officers for D.C.C. elections. The Boseites, as expected, strenuously denied all these charges, counter-attacking SenGupta and his followers as rebels and wreckers.¹⁷⁶ These charges and countercharges, although sufficiently grave in themselves, however, seemed to have been a bit overdrawn. Nevertheless they were pointers to certain important trends in contemporary bhadralok society: for instance, it underlined an urban-rural¹⁷⁷ and

172. Statesman, 17 November, 1929.

173. J.M. SenGupta's press statement, Statesman, 26 May, 1931.

174. Ibid.

175. Ibid.

176. K.S. Roy (B.P.C.C. -Secretary) to SenGupta, Statesman, 1 September, 1929. Subhas Bose's press statement, Statesman, 29 May, 1931.

177. This point is borne out by the fact that the main obstacles before B.N.Sasmal's becoming the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation against Subhas Bose, despite the former's standing as a lawyer and a non-cooperator, were his low caste and his not being a Calcuttan. See Subhas Chandra, 69, 93. N.C. Banerji, who had joined the Congress party in 1921 by resigning his post of Vice-Principal of a Government College ~~too descriptive~~ Sasmal as lacking urbanity. N.C. Banerji, 204.

an East Bengal-West Bengal¹⁷⁸ dichotomy, and to a status complex of the Bangali Kayasths, partly resulting from their having ^{been} assigned in the census report¹⁷⁹ at the beginning of the century a place below the Oriya and Behari Kayasths. The census reports, on the other hand, considerably upgraded the Baidyas, thus producing among sections of the Bangali Kayasths a Shakta pride and a resulting determination to prove their superior prowess.¹⁸⁰

The unending spectacle of squabbles in the Bengal Congress prompted the Congress High Command to intervene in Bengali politics and force it to fall into line with central policies and programmes. Subhas Bose, however, detested the idea of submitting to an enquiry by people from outside the province. He had virtually boycotted¹⁸¹ Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya an A.I.C.C.-member from Bihar, who was

178. The existence of such a tension was projected in the 'Political Notes' column of the Statesman in 1927 in connection with the election of a new B. P. C. C. President which was due shortly after. The columnist wrote that the West Bengal congressmen were in no mood to see the Congress show year after year bossed by an East Bengal man. Statesman, 23 July, 1927.

It may be noted that the incumbent of this office at that time was Akhil Chandra Dutta. Before him J. M. SenGupta held the office as a successor to C. R. Das. All of them came from East Bengal. The new President succeeding Dutt was however from West Bengal—Subhas Chandra Bose.

179. Census of India, 1901 and 1911, V.I. A Kayasth society was formed in Bengal to re-assert their superior status.

180. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, 'Subhas Chandra Bose—His Legacy and Legend' in Pacific Affairs, XXVI,

deputed by the Working Centre Committee to enquire into the election disputes in Bengal, for which reason he had arrived in there in December, 1929. Sitaramiah had to leave Bengal quickly without completing his task, although he did have time to make an adverse report on Bose and his followers.¹⁸² So, early in January, 1930, it brought Pandit Motilal Nehru down to Bengal to help patch up the differences between Subhas Bose and SenGupta before the campaign of Civil Disobedience commenced. Bose, with his distrust for the High Command was apprehensive that Motilal Nehru, would be biased in favour of SenGupta and thus give his verdict accordingly.¹⁸³ But the verdict when finally delivered, was, to Bose's great joy, in his own favour.¹⁸⁴

The Nehru award was, however, no remedy for the Bengal problem but merely a palliative, and too weak a palliative at that, for, with the Calcutta municipal elections due in two months after the award, the Bengal Congress again fell victim to renewed faction-fighting. Doubts were

4 December 1953, 354-55; N.C. Banerji, 216.
 '...to this school of the Sakti Cult Subhas belongs
 and an overwhelming Bengal majority also.'

181. Subhas Chandra, 117.

182. Ibid, 118.

183. Subhas Bose to Mrs. C.R.Das, Correspondence, 405.

184. The Indian Struggle, 193; Subhas Chandra, 118-19.

expressed¹⁸⁵ even as Nehru was announcing his decision, whether it would do any good in restoring unity in the faction-torn Congress in Bengal. The Bengali Congressmen showed little or no enthusiasm at all about civil disobedience until the municipal elections were over.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, the Congress leaders in Calcutta did practically nothing about the forthcoming fight beyond forming two rival committees¹⁸⁷—the All Bengal Civil Disobedience Council formed jointly by the Gandhians and the SenGupta faction, and the All Bengal Council of Civil Disobedience formed by the Boseite-controlled B. P. C. C. Interestingly enough, both the committees chose the same Satish Chandra Das Gupta,¹⁸⁸ a staunch Gandhian as their head. In fact the Calcutta-based Congress factions who had long ignored¹⁸⁹ all organizations at the district level by reducing them to mere vote-gathering

185. FR, January (2), 1930.

186. FR, January to March, 1930; BAR, 1929-30, VIII.

187. FR, March (I), 1930; Statesman, 18 March, 1930.

188. Satish Chandra DasGUPTA (1881-) Baidya, who was a favourite pupil of the renowned nationalist-chemist, Sir P. C. Roy, turned a staunch Gandhian in the 1920's. Founder of the Khādi Pratisthān, a handloom industry organization, at Calcutta and at Sordepur, about 10 miles from Calcutta, he remained after independence a close associate with the Village Industrial Board, Bhārat Sevak Samāj, Khādi Commission. Author of several books on cottage industries, he was also the editor of the Bengali edition of the Harijan and has translated a number of Gandhi's works into Bengali. DNB, I, 371-372; N. C. Banerji, 175-6, 206, 233.

189. In 1928, of 150 subdivisions in Bengal hardly 60 of them possessed any Congress committee, and the total enrolment of Congress members for the province was 25,500. Towards the end of 1929 Bengal claimed to have raised their number to 95,500 still falling much below the quota of 124,500 fixed by the A.I.C.C. for the province.

machines suitable for their respective control of the B. P. C. C. and the Legislature, now found it embarrassing to reactivate the districts which, they were afraid, would possibly go out of their control, thereby upsetting the balance of political power within the provincial organisation. The purpose of civil disobedience in the province thus depended largely on the response from the local Congress leadership and its following in the districts. This response, however, varied from one locality to another depending on the strength of leadership, local conditions or the existence of the right sort of local grievance which the agitators could easily exploit. The salt Satyagraha, the star attraction of the movement, thus depended for its success on physical facilities for making illegal salt or for raiding government and other monopolist salt works, which were almost non-existent¹⁹⁰ in the province except in the maritime districts of Midnapur and 24-Parganas.

190. The climate of Bengal was 'altogether unsuited' to the manufacture of salt by solar evaporation, while large scale manufacture by other methods was economically unviable. The system of Practice of Salt Administration in India, 1931, 85.

Compared to other provinces, the local manufacture of salt in Bengal was negligible. In 1933-34 she produced only 751 maunds (1 maund=82 $\frac{2}{3}$ lbs) of salt compared to 12,800,000 maunds in North India; 13,000,000 maunds in Madras; 12,000,000 maunds in Bombay; 1,352,000 in Sind, and 1,050,000 in Burma. Statistical Abstract for British India for 1924-25 to 1933-34, 285. Similarly Bengal's contribution to the central exchequer as excise duty on locally manufactured salt was also very low as compared to other provinces:

In the Midnapur district, particularly in Contai subdivision salt had always been produced illicitly for local domestic consumption even in normal times;¹⁹¹ the authorities in the area usually turned a blind eye to this sort of unlawful but otherwise harmless activity. Predictably,¹⁹² Contai became the rallying point of the district salt Satyagraha. 24-Parganas district, on the other hand, provided both the SenGuptaite-inspired All Bengal Civil Disobedience Council, and the rival Boseite-controlled B. P. C. C. with much-needed launching pads for the salt Satyagraha; the Civil Disobedience Council's efforts got off to a start at Mahisbathan,¹⁹³ only a short distance to the east of Calcutta, and the B. P. C. C's at Kalikapur,¹⁹⁴ a railway station between Calcutta and Port Canning, City

| <u>Province</u> | Excise duty paid on locally manufactured salt in | | | |
|-----------------|--|------------|------------|------------|
| | 1921-22 | 1924-25 | 1930-31 | 1937-38 |
| | Rs. | Rs. | Rs. | Rs. |
| Bengal | 1,174 | 60 | - | 5,278 |
| Bombay | 11,307,889 | 15,612,029 | 14,416,869 | 17,881,430 |
| Madras | 12,806,730 | 18,503,859 | 13,967,605 | 17,624,033 |

Statistical Abstract for British India for 1921-22 to 1930-31 (Table No. 69); 235-38, Ibid for 1929-30 to 1938-39, Table No. 118, 318.

191. B.A.R., 1929-30, X; F.R. April (1), 1930.
192. Over 40 villages around Contai became involved in salt-making in April, 1930. B.A.R., 1929-30, X.
193. Statesman, 8 April, 1930.
194. Ibid, 11 April, 1930.

Congress leaders and workers taking part in the violation of the salt law, could thus commute as daily passengers. Moreover, at Mahisbathan a local zamindar, who was also the President of the Congress Committee there, had certain long standing scores to settle with the local government officials;¹⁹⁵ he was therefore instrumental in exacerbating the situation. At the same time the agitation there was led by no less a person than Satish Chandra Das Gupta,¹⁹⁶ the President of the provincial Disobedience Council. Das Gupta came from Sodepur adjacent to Mahisbathan and where he ran a well-established Gandhian ashram¹⁹⁷ whose inmates had joined the movement in large numbers. Gandhians from east Bengal¹⁹⁸ too had flocked to Contai boosting local enthusiasm.

The salt Satyagraha, despite its initial vigour, failed¹⁹⁹ to provide a stable base for a sustained agitation. Its weakness came to the fore in H_owrah district early in 1930 when a grounded ship laden with salt became the source of ready supplies of duty-free ^{salt} with the result that

195. Statesman, 8 April, 1930. The camp of Satvagrahis at Mahisbathan was actually situated in the compound of this local zamindar, Laxmikanta Paramanik.

196. Ibid., 8 April, 1930.

197. N.C. Banerji, 253.

198. One contingent of volunteers from Abhoy Ashram of Comilla in east Bengal, led by Dr. Suresh Chandra Banerji, one of its founders, arrived in Contai early in 1930 to take part in the salt Satyagraha. Statesman, 8 April, 1930.

199. Contemporary government reports pointed out that

the people there lost much of their early enthusiasm for the salt Satyagraha.²⁰⁰ The breaking of the salt law was not, however, the only political weapon used in Bengal; there were other variants that included such measures as agitation against chaukidari tax and union board rates, more sedulously carried out in the Midnapur district,²⁰¹ and the boycott of foreign cloth, and picketing of liquor and other excise shops. The picketing of foreign cloth shops formed a very familiar sight in Calcutta²⁰² when other minor tactics like reading publicly from proscribed reading materials in defiance of the law of sedition and the sale of contraband salt in public meetings were also occasionally resorted to.²⁰³ The latter tactics, although not very effective in themselves, were, nevertheless, of good propaganda value. The Congress sanctions against foreign cloth and excisable goods²⁰⁴ seemed to have had varying

salt campaign had slackened in Bengal by the end of April, 1930, and that it had practically ceased by the end of May, 1930. B.A.R., 1929-30, IX, X; F.R. April (2) and May (1) and (2), 1930.

200. F.R. April (1), 1930.

201. B.A.R., 1929-30, XI-XII; F.R. s May to November, 1930.

202. B.A.R., 1929-30; F.R. June (1); July (1) and (2), 1930.

203. F.R. April (1), 1930.

204. In Bengal there was a 28% fall in the government revenue from excise in July, 1930 compared to that in the same month in 1929. F.R. November (1), 1930.

The excise-receipt fell from Rs. 22,800,048 in 1925-26 to Rs. 18,016,156 in 1930-31. Statistical Abstract for British India, 1925-26 to 1930-31, cmd. 4428 (1933), 260-61.

success. This was evident from the noticeable fall both in the volume and value of such imports to the province.²⁰⁵

It must, however, be remembered that other factors like the global trade depression, the slump in the local markets, and the shortage of cash and credit in the rural areas of Bengal also played an important role. Another tactic, particularly popular in the eastern districts of Mymensingh, Tippera and Noakhali, was the picketing of law courts.²⁰⁶ The town of Mymensingh was occasionally the scene of rowdy picketing of excise warehouses and liquor shops.²⁰⁷

It must, however, be pointed out that despite the adverse economic affect of the world-wide depression which had coincided with the Civil Disobedience campaign and brought a catastrophic fall in the prices of agricultural produce, particularly of raw jute,²⁰⁸ there was very little

205. The total volume of import of cotton piece-goods fell from 987.7 million yards in 1927-28 to 342.5 million yards in 1930-31 while that of cotton twist and yarn fell from 14 million lbs. in 1927-28 to 10.5 million lbs. in 1930-31. The total value of all kinds of cotton goods likewise fell from Rs.281 million in 1927-28 to Rs.86 million in 1930-31. B.A.R., 1927-28, 179, 184; Ibid, 1930-31, 95, 96-97

The total value of imported liquor fell from Rs.10.7 million in 1927-28 to Rs.6.6 million in 1931-32 and that of tobacco from Rs.10 million in 1927-28 to Rs.3.9 million in 1931-32. B.A.R., 1927-28, 179. Ibid, 1931-32, 97.

206. F.R. May (1) and (2), 1930.

207. See District Magistrate, Mymensingh (G.S. Dutt) to Chief Secretary, G.B., No.449, 17 May, 1930; Additional District Magistrate, Mymensingh (S.C. Ghatak) to District Magistrate, 15 May, 1930. Superintendent's complaint to Kotwali Police Station, 14 May, 1930.

response to the Congress campaign in rural eastern Bengal. Here the bulk of the population consisted of the Muslim and the Namasudra peasants, both detesting the Congress leadership and its following which came predominantly from the rent-receiving class. The relationship between the landlord and the tenant, which had been sour on the question of tenurial rights, was under considerable strain throughout the 1920's;²⁰⁹ the provincial Congress, on the other hand, forfeited the trust of the peasantry by taking sides with landlords against tenants' interest in the tenancy legislation in 1928.²¹⁰ This distrust was so patent that even the Gandhians, with a record of a decade's good work in the promotion of Khadi and ashrama organization in several eastern districts, miserably failed to take any advantage of the situation. Neither did the economic

208. Average wholesale prices of rice, jute and salt at Calcutta market

| Year | Rice per maund= 82 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. Rs. | Jute (Raw) per bale of 400 lbs. Rs. | Salt per 100 maunds Rs. |
|------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| 1921 | 7.51 | 81.75 | 128.52 |
| 1928 | 7.20 | 74.25 | 100.40 |
| 1929 | 6.12 | 67.25 | 84.80 |
| 1930 | 5.81 | 52.84 | 72.68 |
| 1931 | 4.62 | 32.75 | 62.70 |

G. I. Index Number of Indian Prices 1861-1931. Average Prices of each articles, 1861-1931. Gen. Tables. Table V, 5-9.

209. F.R. January (2), March (1), 1926.

210. The zamindars of Mymensingh when called upon by the District Magistrate to exert their influence against the Civil Disobedience movement, replied that with

INDEX NUMBERS OF WHOLESALE PRICES IN CALCUTTA

INDEX NO. OF WHOLESALE PRICE OF SUGAR IN CALCUTTA IN 1921 WAS 2.10

157

KEY: --- Time (Base)

--- Jute (Manufactured)

--- CEREAL

--- PULSES

--- SUGAR

--- MUSTARD OIL

--- OTHER FOOD ARTICLES

INDEX = 100 in 1914



hardship caused by the slump in crop prices, apparently a good political catalyst, help the Congress in this regard. With the landlord's rent and instalments towards repayment of the debt forming the first charge on the rural economy, the economic distress propelled the Muslim peasants in the Dacca and the Mymensingh districts to riotous action against landlords and moneylenders,²¹¹ both often being the ^{same} ~~the~~ persons, thereby reducing much of the force of the Congress agitation.

The inter-communal and the inter-caste tensions over the share of power, the devolution having already begun under the 1919-Act with more of it to follow, were determining factors behind the overall attitude of the people of eastern Bengal to the high-caste dominated Congress agitation. The civil disobedience campaign was marred by communal riots in Dacca,²¹² Muslims refusing to participate in it. The Calcutta Muslim leaders, then entrenched in a bitter fight with the Congress party over their share of patronage in the Calcutta Corporation, also

215. their last vestige of power and influence taken away by the Bengal Tenancy Amendment Act, 1928, there was not much they could do amongst their ryots, although they promised to effectively restrain their employees from taking part in the agitation. F.R. August (2), 1930.

211. Chief Secretary, G of B to Secretary, Home Department, G of I. No. 11712.P, 4 August, 1930, L/P&J/6/2006; F.R. June (2), July (1), 1930.

212. Chief Secretary, G. of B. to Secretary, Home Department, G. of I. Confidential letter No. 710 P.S., 4 February, 1930, P&J File No. 495 of 1930, L/P&J/6/1996. Statesman, 25-27 May, 1930; F.R. May (1) & (2), June (2), 1930.

declared themselves against the Civil Disobedience movement.²¹³ Resenting bitterly the exclusion of Muslims from the offices of the Corporation, the Calcutta Muslim leaders complained that this was a clear enough indication as to what would happen should the Congress somehow achieve the political power it was striving for.²¹⁴ The Namasudra leaders, too, had long been demanding redress of what they called the high caste oligarchy in the province.²¹⁵ The open opposition of the Muslim and Namasudra leaders largely helped contain the Civil Disobedience in eastern Bengal. Instead, terrorism, which involved fewer bhadralok youths, thrived here.

The success of the Congress agitation in the western district of Midnapur and the adjacent Howrah district,²¹⁶ on the other hand, lay mainly in the caste solidarity of the

213. F.R. May (1); June (2), July (2) and the following till March, 1931, passim.

Of some 2,950 Civil Disobedience offenders held in prisons in Bengal at the end of October, 1932, only 33 were Muslims. I.A.R., 1933, I, 6.

214. F.R. May (2), 1930.

215. Broomfield, 158-60; R.K. Ray, 'Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875-1908' (Cambridge University, Ph.D., thesis, 1973).

216. During the first phase of the agitation, which was brought to an end early in March, 1931 by an agreement between Gandhi and Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, a total of 12,286 persons were convicted by the end of February, 1931. Of them, 2,289 (0.25% of the population), the highest for a district were convicted in Calcutta; 1,426 (0.53% of the population of the district) in Midnapur, and 1,412 (0.29% of the population) in Mymensingh. B.L.C.P., 1931, XXXVI, 3., 522-23..

of the landlords and the tenants, both belonging to the same Mahisya caste.²¹⁷ It was only in these two districts and in the Bishnapur subdivision of Bankura district that the government encountered vigorous activity during the second phase of the civil disobedience movement.²¹⁸

217. B.A.R., 1929-30, XI, F.R. July (2), 1930.

218. Of a total of 16,383 persons arrested mostly for picketing in the province during the first half of 1932, 5,900 were in Tamluk and 4,343 in Contai subdivision of the Midnapur district.

For the provincial Congress leadership, an unwilling partner in the agitation, the Civil Disobedience was a dismal experience. Contrary to bhadralok's policy of least political activity in the countryside as a cover-up for their precarious hold on the rural masses, Gandhi's campaign had activated some three districts which had readily accepted and followed the leadership of the High Command. The B.P.C.C. then headed by Gandhi's vocal critic, Subhas Bose, naturally looked at this new trend with alarm and suspicion. Neither did Gandhi, a shrewd leader of the masses, now saddled with supreme authority in the national Congress, fail to note this new trend which he fully exploited to compel Bengal to fall into line with the Congress centre's policies and programmes. A renewed clash in 1931 between the rival SenGupta and the Bose factions over the control of the B.P.C.C. and the Calcutta Corporation gave the centre its chance to intervene decisively in Bengal and so reverse the hitherto feeble and 'ostrich-like' policy²¹⁹ which had done little good either to itself or its Bengal wing. In September, 1931, M.S. Aney, acting as the A.I.C.C.'s sole arbiter in the Bengal dispute, came up with a verdict which went heavily against Bose²²⁰ and his faction and strongly in favour of their opponents, who were well-disposed

219. Nehru, Autobiography, 313.

220. F.R. September (2), 1931.

to Gandhi and the Congress High Command. Not only was the election to the B.P.C.C., which had sparked off the row early in 1931, set aside much to Bose's discomfiture, but he himself was forced to vacate the office of the President of the B.P.C.C.²²¹ As a further retribution Aney had dissolved the Boseite dominated executive council replacing it with a committee with equal representation from both sides.²²²

Thus disgraced, the Bose faction now took recourse to a more militant line of action that would cause maximum embarrassment to the Congress centre. Early in December, 1931 using the provincial Congress' annual conference at Behrampur²²³ as a convenient springboard for action, they, in conjunction with other small leftist groups, declared the Gandhi-Irwin pact, which they had treated as a mere truce, as having lapsed by blaming the government for breaking its terms.²²⁴ Simultaneously they came out with a call for the resumption of Satyagraha, pending which, they successfully prevailed upon the conference to accept a resolution for a comprehensive boycott of all British goods

221. For details of the Aney award, see Statesman, 27 September, 1931.

222. Ibid., 27 September, 1931.

223. Ibid., 6, 7 and 8 December, 1931.

224. F.R. December (2), 1931.

including British-owned banks, insurance companies, steamship companies and Anglo-Indian newspapers.²²⁵

The upshot of this was that extremists were able to reassert themselves in the B. P. C. C. as it may clearly be seen from the ratification of the boycott resolution on 19 December, 1931.²²⁶ This scared away the moderate N. C. Chander, who had replaced Subhas Bose as President of the B. P. C. C., and N. C. Sen, the Secretary of the same committee, from office.²²⁷ This renewed militancy in Bengal and growing unrest in the U. P. and N. W. F. P., which had compelled the government to promulgate new preventive and repressive Ordinances against fresh outbreaks of violence, forced the Congress centre to resume Civil Disobedience early in 1932. The Congress organisation and its affiliated committees were, in turn, placed under a government ban which was not withdrawn till the formal suspension of the Civil Disobedience campaign in 1934.

Meanwhile the Communal Award,²²⁸ a scheme of communal representation with reservation of seats

225. F. R. December (2), 1931. Statesman, 7 December, 1931.

226. F. R. December (2), 1931. Statesman, 20 December, 1931.

227. Statesman, 15 December, 1931; F. R. December (2), 1931.

228. East India (Constitutional Reforms) Communal Decision, cmd. 4147 of 1932. For the background of the Award see correspondences between India Government and Secretary of State for India, Bengal Government and Secretary of State for India and

announced by the British Government in August, 1932 as part of a new package of reforms created an uproar amongst the bhadralok. The Award, which applied to the provincial legislatures only, not only retained separate electorates for Muslims but these were to be extended to include Hindu Depressed classes. In Bengal it gave Hindus eighty seats, including ten for the Depressed classes in a House of 250 as against 119 to Muslims, whereas under the 1919 Act Hindus had forty-six seats and Muslims thirty-nine in a House of 140. The Award was a rude shock to the bhadralok who had raised their voice against it in the Hindu press, in public meetings, from political platforms and from the floor of the legislature. The Advance, the organ of the SenGupta faction, and the Liberty, the mouthpiece of the rival Bose faction, condemned it variously as 'a gross injustice to Bengal and its Hindu population',²²⁹ which denied 'real autonomy to the children of the soil',²³⁰ and threatened the 'cultural, economic and political life of the province'.²³¹ A public meeting in Calcutta held on 20 August, 1932 rejected the

Cabinet Minutes in file 49 of Private Office Papers (L/PO), India Office Records.

For Hindu reaction to the Award, see R. N. Gilchrist (Reforms Office) to G. of I., letter No. 1160-A.R.D., 16 September, 1932, Home File No. 31/113/32-Poll. G. of I. Confidential Proceedings, Vol. 82, year 1932.

229. Advance 17 and 18 August, 1932. The Award was announced on 16 August, 1932.

Award calling upon Hindus to organise themselves for its repeal.²³² In the provincial legislature the bhadralok MLC's complained that the Award was a sentence of their 'expatriation from the legislature'.²³³

For Bengal the Award was further bedevilled by the Poona Pact, an agreement between the caste Hindu and Depressed Classes at Poona modifying the Communal Award, which was reached in response to Gandhi's fast in the Poona gaol where he was under detention following the resumption of the Civil Disobedience campaign. By the terms of this pact the Depressed Classes had surrendered their separate electorates under the Award agreeing merely to the selection of a panel of candidates at a primary stage; the candidates so selected would subsequently contest elections in Hindu general constituencies. In return a larger number of reserved seats than those given in the Award were allotted to them, the new seats coming from the share of the caste Hindus.²³⁴ In Bengal caste Hindus had to concede an additional twenty seats, thus reducing²³⁵ their share to

230. Advance, 17 and 18 August, 1932.

231. Liberty, 17 August, 1932.

232. Statesman, 21 August, 1932.

233. B.L.C.P., 1932, XXXIX.4., 120.

234. The Indian Struggle, 247-249; Memorandum 68. By Jitendralal Banerjee on behalf of the Bengal branch of the Varnashram Sunrajya Sangha, J.C.E., II, 1565-66.

235. Liberty, 17 August, 1932; B.A.R., 1932-33, XXV.

50 general seats in a House of 250. The Bengali caste Hindus, who were unrepresented²³⁶ at the Poona deliberations which in any case they did not take seriously²³⁷ at the beginning, were stunned at this outcome, especially when Depressed Classes constituted no acute problem in that province. They now made a concerted efforts through the press, public meetings, representations and memorials to the British cabinet for the reversal of the Award and the Poona Pact,²³⁸ but to no avail.

In these efforts, the bhadralok were left to themselves by the Congress centre which, working on an all-India strategy of accommodating Muslims, had adopted a 'neither accept nor reject'²³⁹ policy to the Communal Award. This made the caste Hindu Bengalis turn to the Congress Nationalist Party²⁴⁰ which was formed primarily to fight the Communal Award and the White Paper²⁴¹ embodying the future

236. B. C. Chatterjee's Memorandum to Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, 1933. J. C. E. II, 1393-94, 1401.

237. J. L. Banerjee's evidence before Joint Committee, J. C. E. II, 1430.

238. For a short account of protests made against the Poona Pact, see J. L. Banerjee's evidence, Ibid, 1416.

239. The Indian National Congress, Resolutions 1934-6, 19-20.

240. The formation of the party was announced by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who was a co-founder of the party with Dr. Moonje and M. S. Aney, on 4 August, 1934. The party was formally inaugurated at the All India Nationalist Conference held in Calcutta on 18 and 19 August, 1934. See D. Chakravarty and C. Bhattacharyya, Congress Policy on Communal Award: Bengal Forces a Change, B. A. R. 1933-34, IX-X.

constitution of India. Its immediate object was to fight the interim elections to the Central legislature in 1934 against the official Congress party candidates, who were contesting the elections under the banner of the recently-revived Swarajya party, dilating on the wrongs of the Bengali and the Punjabi Hindus—the Punjab being the other province hardest hit by the Award. In the election, the Nationalist Congress party candidates captured all the Bengal seats.²⁴² As a further demonstration of their strength, the Bengal Congressmen formally rejected the Communal Award by a large majority at the annual conference of the Provincial Congress at Dinajpur in April, 1935.²⁴³ Another important development taking place at this time as a result of the Award was the growing influence of the Hindu Mahasabha, a militant communal organization in the political life of the province.

It should, however, be noted that the unanimous bhadralok opposition against the Communal Award was based not so much on the question of electorates as on that of distribution of seats which clearly threatened their preponderance in the House. In fact differing regional interests divided the east and west Bengal Hindus on the

241. Proposals for Indian Constitutional Reform, cmd. 4268 of 1933.

242. B.A.R., 1934-35, XII.

243. Ibid, XII; Statesman, 25 April, 1935; F.R. April (2), 1935.

question of electorates—while those from Hindu-majority West Bengal, had nothing to fear from joint electorates and were 'favourably disposed to it', those from east Bengal with their minority population, were 'simply frightened of it'.²⁴⁴ The results of the district board elections in the 1920's and the 1930's, when eastern Bengal Muslims had greatly improved their position were clear indications of their declining influence and a ^{POINTED} ~~point~~ to what would have come about ^{if} the joint electorate scheme were implemented. Their last hope of maintaining their precarious position, therefore, lay in preserving separate electorates. It is worth noting here that east Bengal Hindus were instrumental behind wrecking the consensus reached early in 1934 between Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President, and M.A. Jinnah, the Muslim League President, on representation and electorate questions.²⁴⁵ The two had reached a working formula for the replacement of separate electorates by joint electorates by allowing the Muslims of Bengal and the P^{un}jab a ^{differential} franchise and quota of seats given by the Award.²⁴⁶

Even in Bengal's difficult predicament, the bhadralok were unable to close ranks in the provincial Congress.

244. G.D. Birla, In the Shadow of the Mahatma, 150.

245. Gallagher, 312-13.

246. Ibid.

The passing of the old rivalry between SenGupta and Bose from the political scene of Bengal—the former had died and the latter was then on a trip to Europe forced upon him by government—did not end the power struggle in the B.P.C.C. or the Calcutta Corporation. The old faction in 1934 passed into the hands of J. C. Gupta and Dr B. C. Roy respectively.²⁴⁷ A year later, SenGuptaites having dwindled, . . . Sarat Chandra Bose, deputising for his brother Subhas, took command of one faction, Dr. B. C. Roy heading the other.²⁴⁸ With the provincial elections under the reformed Government of India Act, 1935 drawing near, the two rival factions, however, agreed to share power in the B.P.C.C. Although the relations of the B.P.C.C. with the Congress centre remained strained on the question of the Award, the centre was able to retain its firm control in Bengal. In the selection of candidates, the All India Parliamentary Committee showed its high-handedness by rejecting many of the nominees of the Provincial Parliamentary Committee.²⁴⁹ After the election in 1937, the Bengal Congressmen were prevented by the Congress high command from taking office in a coalition ministry with Muslims,

247. K. M. Munshi, 369.

248. Chakravarty and Bhattacharyya, 7.

249. Ibid., 19-20.

although given a free hand, prominent members of all factions would accept office. One of the reasons why the Congress centre felt so confident about taking such a tough line in Bengal was probably because of the Bengal Congress' organizational weakness²⁵⁰ and its internal strife.

250. In 1936 B.P.C.C. claimed a total membership of 49,000 only with 443 primary committees, not all of them actually functioning.

Chapter III

STUDENTS AND POLITICS

A new dimension was added to Congress politics in Bengal at the beginning of this century by the emerging force of organised students and youth. By the 1920's they had become institutionalised into the All Bengal Students' Association (ABSA) and the All Bengal Youth Association (ABYA), with a network of district branches. Within a short time their activities had become sufficiently serious to draw the attention of both the local and central governments. In June, 1929, the Government of India addressed a letter¹ on this subject to the Government of Bengal drawing the latter's attention to the menacing proportions the youth movement were assuming in that province. This correspondence reflected the concern of both parties that the movement had made 'considerably more progress in Bengal than in any other part of India', and they agreed that the local government should reassess the situation in the light of this development. The local government in turn asked the district officers to check any manifestation of lawlessness by youth and students. Who, then, were these activist students and how did they become involved in politics?

1. H.G. Haig, Secretary, Home, Political, G of I, to Chief Secretary, Gof B, Secret No.D.1994/29, 24 June, 1929, P&J File 578/1929, L/P&J/6/1976.

Generally speaking, they formed only a small section of the city-based college and high school students, although all of them could not be said to have had the same political orientation or conviction. A good many of them, to be more precise, many of the school students had none at all. Many student-participants in a political demonstration could even be oblivious of the issues involved; in such instances their participation, did not count for anything more than an act of truancy or ordinary delinquency reinforced by the anonymity² of collective action or by general class-room boredom. Many students, on the other hand, might have stayed away by remaining at home either of their own accord or through the persuasion of their parents who wished to avoid trouble, although such an absence served objectively to support the strike action. The active students compared to the entire student population were thus only a tiny minority, though when taking to the streets they formed a sizeable crowd. This is evident from the number of striking students and their proportion to the total student population during the Non-Cooperation movement of 1921-22 and the Civil Disobedience campaign of 1930-31. According to official estimates, which did not distinguish between active and passive participation, 6,306 out of 23,887 college students, i. e. about 26.5%, and 45,006 out of 196,548 high

2. Allen D. Ross, Student Unrest in India: A Comparative Approach, 250.

school students, i. e. 22.9% withdrew from the official education system during the Non-Cooperation³ movement. These numbers were far less during the civil disobedience campaign—2,360 out of 23,280 college students, i. e. 10.18% and 10,700 out of 285,479 high school students, i. e. 3.98% struck for a month or so.⁴

Judged as a social group, the politicised students belonged almost exclusively to the high caste Hindu middle class from which the Congress leadership and its following came. A sample of 670⁵ student civil disobedience activists shows that 639 of them belonged to the three high castes, 15 to depressed classes, 3 Bhuddhists and 13 Muslims. This is in line with the composition of the student population as a whole.

The greatest incentive to student activism in Bengal during the period under review came undoubtedly from its legitimization by the moral authority ofⁱⁿ Congress leaders who stood in a quasi parental or avuncular relationship to the Indian youth.⁶ Many parents, themselves involved in

3. Sixth Q. R. P. E. B. 91-92.

4. D. P. I., 1930-31, 47, 55.

5. The sample is taken from a list of 766 students either expelled or arrested or convicted during the Civil Disobedience movement in A. N. Roy, Student Fight for Freedom, 198-226. Roy was a member of the working committee of the ABSA. The list, though not comprehensive, nevertheless, represents a good cross-section of activist students. The sample came down to 670 after the elimination of 96 cases of multiple connection. The caste classification has been made on the basis of surnames.

the nationalist movement and in educational administration and policies, particularly with the politics of Calcutta University,⁷ might not have been averse to their children becoming involved in occasional confrontation with authorities so long as their children's educational careers were not threatened. They might even have a sort of an extenuating feeling that youths unlike other political offenders, would not be dealt with according to the full rigour of the law. Thus during the Non-Cooperation movement, C.R. Das had sent his only son and wife to court arrest,⁸ of course with the political motive of inspiring a large number of youths and women to join the Congress agitation. How the Congress leaders had cajoled young men and women into joining the nationalist agitation becomes clear from their appeal to the latter's sentiment and idealism. During the Non-Cooperation movement, addressing the Calcutta students, C.R. Das said, "Is this the time for study, art and literature, science and mathematics? Oh, the shame of it when the Mathi (Mother goddess) calls and they (students) have not

6. Edward Shils, 'Students, Politics and Universities in India' in Philip G. Altbach (ed.) Turmoil and Transition, Higher Education and Student Politics in India, 2.

7. ^{J.H. Brown} Elite Conflict in a Plural Society, 53.

8. IAR, 1921, 246; The Indian Struggle, 64.

the heart to hear!"⁹ Addressing the Punjab Students in 1929, Subhas Bose implored his audience to join politics for 'a subject nation has nothing but politics'.¹⁰ Earlier addressing the Bengal youth in Calcutta in 1928, Bose had alluded to a philosophy of activism belittling the passivity of the Pondicheri and Sabarmati schools, an oblique reference to Aurobindo and Gandhi's inaction.¹¹ Similarly J. M. SenGupta, not to be outdone by his political rival, Bose, exonerated students of the charges of 'indiscipline' and 'disobedience' levelled against them by the educational authorities.¹² On the contrary he laid the blame at the government's door for their 'ruthless repression' of students which, he said, more than anything else was responsible for strikes. Only national freedom bringing with it a system of national education, said SenGupta, could bring an end to this deadlock.¹³

It is not hard to see why the Congress leaders in Bengal placed so high a value on student and youth participation

9. I.A.R., 1921, II, 246; Bengal Government's communique of 10 December, 1921 explaining the arrest of Das, Statesman, 11 December, 1921.

10. Statesman, 20-21 October, 1929.

11. I.Q.R., 1928, II, 446.

12. I.Q.R., 1928, I., 397-98; Statesman, 8 April, 1928. SenGupta made this observation in course of his presidential address at the annual Conference of the Bengal Congress at Bashirhat.

Indiscipline was rather a generic term that the educational authorities used to describe any termination of educational activity by students during the nationalist movement in India. Turmoil and Transition, 51.

13. Statesman, 8 April, 1928.

in politics in the 1920's. Politics, whether electoral or agitational, had now become more broad-based than before; the extended franchise had enlarged the electorate and the Congress' Non-Cooperation movement under Gandhi's leadership had for the first time involved the masses. As a result the city-based Congress politicians with their poor mass contacts came to rely more than ever upon students, who as a class had greater articulation and social mobility than any other segment of society,¹⁴ and so became workable link between the elitist leadership and the peasantry. So even before the Congress had finally decided upon the Non-Cooperation, it resolved upon the withdrawal of students from the official education system at its special session at Calcutta in September, 1920.¹⁵ Three months later while finally adopting the programme of Non-Cooperation at Nagpur, it did not forget to issue an impassioned call to students over the age of eighteen to enrol themselves as Congress volunteers. Students who looked to great changes taking place through the adult party increasing its influence or even coming to power, took it upon themselves to recruit support and provide the mass base for demonstration.

14. Seymour Martin Lipset, 'The possible effects of student activism on international politics', Quest, 61, April-June, 1969, 38.

15. D. Chakravarty and C. Bhattacharyya (ed.) Congress in Evolution, A Collection of Congress resolutions from 1885 to 1934 and other important documents, 136.

This, however, does not explain adequately why Bengal students had so readily responded to the Congress call. One way of seeking an explanation for it is to look at educational institutions themselves to see if they bore any responsibility for it. English education, after overcoming certain initial obstacles from conservative quarters had held sway over the bhadralok since the early nineteenth century primarily for the social status and economic successes it had brought for its recipients. As a result schools and colleges multiplied and the student population swelled correspondingly.¹⁶ It was, however, an uncoordinated expansion having little relation to Indian life and economic needs which in turn brought numerous pressures on society as a whole and on the bhadralok in particular. By the early

16. Number of educational institutions in Bengal

| Year | Boys' Secondary Schools | Colleges | Universities |
|---------|-------------------------|----------|--------------|
| 1921-22 | 2,563 | 36 | 2 |
| 1926-27 | 2,675 | 45 | 2 |
| 1931-32 | 2,975 | 49 | 2 |
| 1936-37 | 3,079 | 50 | 2 |

Number of Students

| | | | |
|---------|---------|--------|-------|
| 1921-22 | 309,844 | 16,942 | 1,859 |
| 1926-27 | 380,829 | 22,420 | 1,699 |
| 1931-32 | 422,008 | 19,744 | 1,864 |
| 1936-37 | 482,962 | 26,591 | 2,060 |

Eighth Q. R. P. E. B., 86.

twentieth century the structural¹⁷ defects of the education system in Bengal had become very apparent. Both the local government and the Calcutta University Commission, appointed in 1917 to enquire into the state of education in the province, made a long catalogue of^{There} defects.¹⁸ Chief among them were overcrowding, inadequate physical facilities, dearth of qualified teachers¹⁹ due to the unattractive scales of pay,²⁰ particularly in secondary schools, resulting in lower standard of education, class

17. M.M. P.C.I., Cmd. 2311 (1924), 227.

18. See C.U.C.R., V, II, cmd. 390 (1919), 297-304; Fifth Q.R.P.E.B., 24-28; Sixth Q.R.P.E.B., 49-50; D.P.I. 1915-16, 6-7; Simon Commission, VIII, 30-35.

19. Except in government schools, trained teachers were still rare even in 1932. When out of 24,840 high school teachers only 4771 were trained of whom only 744 were graduate. Eighth Q.R.P.E.B., 37. Teaching in high schools was so unremunerative and unattractive that qualified men accepted this calling with reluctance and as a last resort only. G of B. Education Department Resolution No. 3346-Edn. Sixth Q.R.P.E.B. ; See also Eighth Q.R.P.E.B. 37; Simon Commission, VIII, 30.

20. C.U.C.R., V, II, 302-03; Fifth Q.R.P.E.B. 34-35; D.P.I. 1923-24, 153. The average salary of high school teachers in Bengal was Rs. 55.4 in 1926-27 and Rs. 55.8 in 1931-32. The scale of pay in best high schools under public management was Rs. 35-Rs. 800 and that in privately managed schools was Rs. 20-Rs. 300. The vast majority of these schools were, however, under private management; most of the school teachers therefore, drew their salaries in the lower grade.

In 1927, only 4% of the high schools in Bengal were under public management, and the rest under private management--48.4% of them receiving meagre grants in aid, and 47.5% receiving no government grant at all over which government had very little control. In 1932 only 3.8% of all the Bengal high schools were under direct government control, 47.5% were aided and 48.7% un-aided and under private management. Eighth Q.R.P.E.B., 35, 37.

room boredom²¹ and impersonal student-teacher relationship. They had also pointed to the heavy literary bias of the syllabi which, they said, rarely acted as a preparation for life.²² Such drawbacks in the educational structure constituted a potential danger for any society.

But what made the situation worst was the concentration of a large number of institutions and students in Calcutta. The Calcutta college students in 1932 and 1937 formed well over half the total college student population in the province,²³ and that too was exclusive of the post-graduate students²⁴ in Calcutta University and others pursuing professional or vocational courses. One remarkable aspect of the college student population was that over sixty percent of them came from five privately managed colleges—from City College, Ripon College, Bangabasi College, Metropolitan

21. C. U. C. R., II, 354.

22. C. U. C. R., V, II, 302; Fifth Q. R. P. E. B., 24.

23. There were 10744 college students in Calcutta against the provincial total of 19744 (54.4%) in 1932 and 14328 against 26,591 (54%) in 1937. There were in all 50 colleges in the province in 1932 and 1937, of them 18 were situated in Calcutta. Ninth Q. R. P. E. B., 84-85 and 86. Table 50.

On the other hand, 38,105 and 45418 students were studying in secondary schools in Calcutta in 1932 and 1937 respectively against the provincial total of 422,008 and 482,962 in that order. In both cases the Calcutta school students formed 9% of the provincial total. Calcutta had 94 secondary schools in 1932 and 101 in 1937 ad against 2975 and 3079 respectively in the province. Ninth Q. R. P. E. B. 57, 58. Table 33 and 34.

College and Ashutosh College.²⁵ These were the colleges supplying the largest number of student activists. On their teaching staff were often to be found persons connected with Congress politics.²⁶

On the other hand, Calcutta students, with so large a concentration of them in the city, had to face with an acute accommodation problem. Of the huge student population in the city only about a quarter²⁷ lived with their parents and local guardians; the rest, gathered from the mofussils, had to find accommodation in hostels and messes, mostly in unhealthy, over-crowded and unsupervised conditions.²⁸ Many of them fresh in the city, found it difficult to adjust themselves to unfamiliar surroundings. Here they became subjected to tensions arising out of their restrictive home background and the wider social and academic horizons and the greater freedom they found in Calcutta. Brought

24. Post-graduate departments of Calcutta University had an enrolment of 19,744 in 1932 and 26,591 in 1937.
25. These five colleges together absorbed 6,431 of 10,744 (60%) Calcutta college students in 1932, and 9,332 out of 14,328 (65%) in 1937. Calculated from figures in Eighth Q. R. P. E. B., Supplement, 60-61; Ninth Q. R. P. E. B. 84, Table 49.
26. Surendra Nath Banerjea once taught at Ripon College, J. L. Banerjee, another Congress politician, taught at Vidyasagar College, and N. C. Banerji, who had resigned the Vice-Principalship of Chittagong College, a publicly managed institution, during the Non-Cooperation movement found a position on the teaching staff of the Bangabasi College.
27. Simon Commission, VIII, 37.
28. C. U. C. R., V, II, 1919, Cmd. 390, 304. No reliable

up as protected children under the indulgent maternal and grand parental care and at the same time in a reserved and reticent son and father relationship,²⁹ most of these new arrivals in the city were liable to falter in making independent decisions when they were required to do so as they moved from the family to their schools and colleges. This lack of orientation and the high degree of freedom they had now come to enjoy, it is likely, made them feel insecure amongst unfamiliar faces and submit to men of more robust personality, although perhaps unconvinced in their private feelings.³⁰ In turn they might have seen identification with campus organizations and in peerhood as a replacement for the collective security they had enjoyed in their families. Moreover, ^{There was} the problem of ego-identity and the 'role confusion'³¹ associated with it, which some sociologists suggest are inseparable from adolescence, a danger period especially in traditional societies where the concept of adolescence is non-existent and where adult

statistics of the students residing in private messes are available. In 1922, of 4,830 students residing in Calcutta hostels and messes, 2,134 lived in regular hostels, 731 in attached messes and 1,925 private messes. See Sixth Q.R.P.E.B. 87. In 1930 3,400 Calcutta students lived in hostel and messes. Eighth Q.R.P.E.B. 128-130. These numbers, however, do not account for the messes not recognised by the Education department.

29. C.U.C.R. I, 1, 126-27.

30. C.U.C.R., I, I, 126-27.

31. Eric H. Erikson, Childhood and Society, 252-55.

life means a direct transition from a prolonged childhood.

Added to these probable psychological and sociological factors were the more perceptible economic strains which worked as more direct causes of social unsettlement and grievances. English education was taken in Bengal purely and simply as a means of admission to a career, with a bias for the white collar jobs.³² But with the expansion of education, there came from other parts of India, too, enormous pressures on the inelastic sources of employment in government offices and firms, which had reached near saturation point by the beginning of the twentieth century.³³ The situation had worsened still further after World War I when government departments in the economy drive had to cut recruitment drastically and in some cases retrench existing clerical staff. As cost of living had risen education

32. D.P.I., 1915-16, 6.

33. G. of B., Education Department, Resolution No. 1918 Edn., Sixth Q.R.P.E.B. 2— 'The ordinary professions are over-crowded and there is hardly any opening in government, and commercial offices for the vast crowd of unemployed graduates'.

had become more expensive³⁴ although far less an asset than before. Surmising the situation, one of the School Inspectors stated in 1915 that students on leaving their schools found themselves poorer than they had been while at school; he foresaw the political danger of overproduction of what he called de'classe citizens of the 'physically weak, mentally inflated unemployed educated men'.³⁵ By the beginning of the 1920's many parents and their children seemed to have become aware of the 'economic waste'³⁶ of the system of university education.

Dilating on this point, the government review on the progress of education in Bengal candidly pointed out in 1922 that a university education and diploma, once an almost

| 34. | Average annual fee per student in | | Average annual cost per student in | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|---------|
| | Secondary school | College | School | College |
| | Year | | | |
| | | Rs. | Rs. | Rs. |
| | 1916-17 | 14.9 | 58.05 | 24.7 |
| | 1921-22 | 18.5 | 75 | 34.6 |
| | 1926-27 | 18.7 | 87 | 35.7 |
| | 1931-32 | 19.6 | 91 | 36.2 |
| | | | | 234 |

Fifth Q. R. P. E. B. Special Table, 29; Sixth Q. R. P. E. B. Special table No. 35, 21, Special table No. 36, 28-29; Seventh Q. R. P. E. B. Special table (particular) No. 21, 42; Eighth Q. R. P. E. B., Supplement, 31, 35.

35. Fifth Q. R. P. E. B., 45-46.

unfailing passport to respectable employment had become less and less a marketable asset. It then led 'merely to the overstocked market of briefless advocates³⁷ and to the cut throat competition for clerical employment'.³⁸

This grim prospect of life naturally produced among many Bengali youths a feeling of despondency and cynicism about the value of the existing system of education which now appeared to them purposeless. It is scarcely surprising that they now increasingly protested about an impersonal bureaucracy and lack of student participation in decision making within the college and university.³⁹ So long as the system of education offered a fair prospect, if not a guarantee of employment, the authoritarian structure was not generally questioned. When it ceased to do so protests

36. G. of B., Education Department, Resolution No.1918 Edn., Sixth Q.R.P.E.B. 2.

37. Number of candidates and passes in Bachelor of Law examinations.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>No. of candidates</u> | <u>Passes</u> |
|-------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| 1921-22 | 1284 | 504 |
| 1926-27 | 1732 | 786 |
| 1931-32 | 1368 | 584 |

Seventh Q.R.P.E.B. Supplement, 59; Eighth Q.R.P.E.B. 34-35.

38. Sixth Q.R.P.E.B. 93.

Number of candidates and passes in Matriculation, I.A. and I.Sc., B.A. and B.Sc. and M.A. and M.Sc. examinations

| <u>Examina- tion</u> | <u>1921-22</u> | | <u>1926-27</u> | | <u>1931-32</u> | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | <u>Candi- dates</u> | <u>Passes</u> | <u>Candi- dates</u> | <u>Passes</u> | <u>Candi- dates</u> | <u>Passes</u> |
| Matriculation | 18030 | 14165 | 14794 | 7903 | 17662 | 11401 |
| I.A. & I.Sc. | 5690 | 3895 | 8745 | 4038 | 9595 | 3199 |
| B.A. & B.Sc. | 3113 | 2233 | 4433 | 3270 | 3708 | 2146 |
| M.A. & MSc. | 673 | 482 | 679 | 416 | 751 | 489 |

about it became louder. Students' unions, which were introduced in some colleges at the beginning of the century, had now changed from debating chambers to institutions voicing students' grievances and taking interest increasingly in broader social and political issues.

In these conditions, the nationalist leaders at the beginning of the century found one constant profitable cause in advocating a national system of education in place of the imported system which they had denounced as having a denationalising influence on the Indians.⁴⁰ The issue had featured prominently both in the anti-partition agitation of 1905-1911 and in the Non-Cooperation movement of 1921-22. The national education movement gave a new fillip to students' interest in politics. The principal function of national schools seemed to have been political indoctrination

Seventh Q. R. P. E. B. Supplement, 69; Eighth Q. R. P. E. B. 34-35.

39. The All Bengal Students' Conference at Calcutta in 1928 passed resolution demanding students' right of representation on the Senates of Calcutta and Dacca Universities. I. Q. R. 1928, II, 463.
40. Gandhi in Young India, 13, 27 April and 1 September, 1921, quoted in T. Hingorani (ed.) To the students, 31, 32, 36, 38, 64.

English education had, however, a positive contribution to make to the growth of the Indian nationalist movement. The English language served as an important medium of communication between regions speaking different local languages and dialects. Nationalism was itself a western concept, and as Indian nationalism was fed by ideas of Fabian socialism and British liberalism, English education had a positive role in the growth and promotion of nationalism in India. The Indian nationalist leaders were not only the product of English education but also England-

of youths. The appearance of such question that in the 1906 history paper, fifth standard, requiring students to examine the early form and the prevailing nature of the English connection with India⁴¹ were an open invitation to vent anti-British feeling—an enquiry into the affairs of national institutions by the Criminal Investigation Department followed.

The national system, as reintroduced during the Non-Cooperation movement, did not, however, differ⁴² in any way from the official system in its structure. The national institutions,⁴³ a great many of them teaching upto middle school standard, ~~imitated~~ the official syllabi although not conforming to the same standard of instruction, held no prospect of higher education or employment for their students. The Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, reported⁴⁴ in 1929 that out of twenty-nine national institutions working there only sixteen taught upto middle school level, six up to

returned. For details see B. T. McCully, English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism.

41. Haripada and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement, 1905-1910, 67. The paper was set by Aurobindo Ghose, Principal, National College, Calcutta.
42. D. P. I., 1920-21, 7.
43. National institutions did not ask for nor receive aid from the government. Nor were they any way 'controlled or inspired' by government nor affiliated to any university established by government.
44. D. P. I., 1928-29, 53.

high school level. Others included three medical schools, of which only one taught up to the standard of the Government medical school; the rest were technical and vocational schools of which only the Bengal Technical Institute⁴⁵ taught in a meaningful way. Staffed by unqualified and inexperienced teachers recruited from among local Congress workers and filled with wayward deserters from the official system, these schools were no substitute for those under the government system. Financially handicapped, the national schools depended solely on occasional windfalls from individual non-cooperators given more as a means of maintaining their political credibility than from serious concern for education. In rural areas, the main source of finance for these schools was the sale proceeds of agricultural products contributed by students as their fees, which was too meagre even to meet the nominal pay bills of the teachers.⁴⁶ As a result these schools languished in a short time.⁴⁷

45. This institution survived till the last to form the nucleus of the present Jadavpur University.

46. Abul Mansur Ahmed, Āmār Dekhā Rājnitir Panchāsh Bachhar (Fifty Years of Politics as I have seen them), 30.

47. National schools with their roll strength.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>No. of institutions</u> | <u>No. of students</u> |
|-------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1920 | 170 | 13,468 |
| 1922 | 190 | 15,000 |
| 1927 | 45 | 3,208 |
| 1932 | 19 | 1,647 |
| 1937 | 1 (at Calcutta) | 160 |

Sixth Q. R. P. E. B. 92, 119; Eighth Q. R. P. E. B. 131; Ninth Q. R. P. E. B. 167; S. K. Dutta Gupta, 'The Effects of the Diarchy upon the educational development in Bengal,

Yet the greatest success the Non-cooperation movement had in Bengal was, indeed, in the boycott of the official education system. According to government estimates, between September, 1920 and September, 1921 educational institutions under the official system had suffered a net loss of 51,690⁴⁸ students—6684 in colleges and 45,006 in secondary schools, although by the end of 1921, a good many of them, other than the bolder spirits or those who had nothing to lose or who had committed themselves beyond recovery, returned to their educational institutions.⁴⁹ One very interesting feature of student participation in the Congress agitation was the comparative non-involvement of the maturer post-graduate students;⁵⁰ the career-minded engineering and medical students, with their fairly secure future, on the other hand, remained completely aloof⁵¹ from

1919-1935' (London University M.A. thesis, 1949), 240-41.

48. Sixth Q. R. P. E. B., 92-93.

49. Ibid., 7.

50. The number of post-graduate arts side students fell from 1,261 to 1,045, by 17% between 1921 and 1922 but that of science side students actually rose from 158 to 189, by some 20%. Sixth Q. R. P. E. B., 91.

51. Although all the colleges of Calcutta including the Presidency College were temporarily closed in 1921, the Engineering College, the Medical College, post-graduate classes of Calcutta University and the Law College in the city were kept open and functioned normally. At Presidency College, there were no strikes, yet it was closed as a precautionary measure. Sixth Q. R. P. E. B. 90.

the agitation. Even the law students, who were particularly urged⁵² upon by the Congress leaders to join the movement, made a poor response. This was also true of students at lower levels for whom education promised economic advancement. This is evident from the fact that contrary to the general apprehension that the number of matriculation candidates would fall greatly in 1922, it actually rose, if only by six.⁵³ This tends to confirm the view that generally speaking it was the younger, arts course students, not the academic minded or those pursuing courses directly leading to careers, who constituted the key element among student non-cooperators.

The Bengal students, despite their involvement in considerable numbers in the non-cooperation movement, did not have a permanent organization of their own till 1928. This adds weight to the argument that in general they took little direct interest in politics and that it was mainly external pressure that brought them into politics. The movement, however, did bring a small section of them, particularly in Calcutta, more directly into politics and also into contact with extremist Congress politicians like Subhas Chandra Bose, a hero to Bengali youth since his

52. See Lala Lajput Rai's presidential address at All India College Students Conference at Nagpur in December, 1920; I.A.R. 1920, 247-47

53. Sixth Q. R. P. E. B. 92.

resignation from the Indian Civil Service and his appointment as the first Principal of the Calcutta National College founded in 1921. The link between Congress politicians on the one hand and students and youth on the other became stronger as the former came to depend increasingly on the services of the latter as canvassers⁵⁴ in legislative council elections and as volunteers at the conferences of the district and provincial Congresses. Congress leaders in Bengal, to keep up the spirit of students, now started organising students' conferences concurrently with the annual sessions of the provincial Congress. The first such students conference was held in 1924 at Sirajganj⁵⁵ alongside the Provincial Congress conference there. It was in the same year that the Calcutta Students Association⁵⁶ was founded under Congress' patronage, the first durable organization⁵⁷ of the Calcutta

54. Simon Commission, VIII, 108.

55. It was presided ^{over} by Sir P. C. Roy. The second conference of Bengal Students was held at Faridpur in 1925; C. R. Das, the President of the main event, the Provincial Congress Conference, presided over it. In 1926 the conference was held at Krishnanagar, again as a side show of the Provincial Congress Conference there, and was presided ^{over} by N. C. Chunder, a Congressman.

56. F. J. Lowman, Deputy Inspector General of Police, I. B., C. I. D., Bengal. 'A Short note on the Youth Association in Bengal', P&J File 578, L/P&J/6/1976.

57. The first student organization in Bengal, Students Association, was, however, formed in 1875 under the initiative of Ananda Mohan Bose, a prominent leader of the Indian Association.

students. P. C. Roy, a chemistry teacher at Calcutta University who was known for his strong nationalist views, became the President of the Association which was transformed in 1928 into the All Bengal Students Association, the first provincial organization of Bengal students.

The ABSA had come into existence against the background of renewed student activity. The comparative lull in Congress' political activity since the failure of the Non-Cooperation movement had kept the educational campuses relatively free of trouble. The situation, however, changed as the Congress left showed new signs of activity; it had succeeded in carrying a resolution at the Madras Congress in 1927 accepting independence as the Congress's goal. Meanwhile Subhas Chandra Bose,⁵⁸ who was known for his extremist political views and for his sympathies with the terrorist movement, had become the President of the provincial Congress in 1928 with the support of the Karmi Sangha, a Congress workers' organization dominated by ex-terrorists and other extremist elements. Bose now took upon himself the task of organising the youth and students as a ballast partly against his political rival, J. M. SenGupta, and the Congress centre and partly as a preparation for any future confrontation with government. This gave impetus

58. For Subhas Bose's connection with the student and youth movement, see The Indian Struggle, 152, 153 and Lowman, P&J File No. 578, L/P&J/6/1976.

to fresh campus activity with political overtones as was evident from an incident early in 1928 at Presidency College, Calcutta. Promode Kumar Ghosal, the College Union Secretary, made a blatantly political speech on the College Founder's Day, espousing student participation in the nationalist movement and exhorting his co-students in the College to emulate Subhas Chandra Bose, an ex-student of the College.⁵⁹ His speech, particularly the reference to Bose who was in fact expelled from the College and rusticated⁶⁰ by the University in 1916 for his alleged involvement in the assault on E. F. Oaten, a history teacher, as expected offended the College authorities. The office bearers of the Students' Union had given further offence to the authorities by choosing the Congress tricolour instead of the College colour for volunteer badges at the function, and by presenting the song Bandemataram.⁶¹ This led to the suspension of the College Union and expulsion of its Secretary from the College.⁶²

Meanwhile the Congress had decided to boycott the Simon Commission and called for an anti-Commission

59. Press statement of the Governing Body of the Presidency College, Statesman, 9 February, 1928.

60. Oaten Papers, E. F. Oaten, My Memoirs of India, MSS (Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge), 46; Hugh Toye, The Springing Tiger, 18.

61. Statesman, 9 February, 1928.

62. Ibid, 4 & 9 February, 1928.

demonstration on the day of the Commission's arrival in India on 3 February, 1928. On that day students at various places observed a hartal. In Calcutta, the Presidency College became the main centre of picketing apparently in retaliation for the earlier suspension of the Union and expulsion of its secretary, and also because it was a government College and the authorities were determined to see the college function normally. There were scenes of scuffles between striking and non-striking students and a violent clash between pickets and the police. The situation took such a serious turn that the police had to resort to firing on two occasions and although no injuries resulted, a military presence had to be called into the vicinity of the college to save the situation from deteriorating still further.⁶³

The Presidency College authorities responded to the strike action by taking disciplinary action against over a dozen students, ranging from heavy fines to expulsion, and by closing the college and the attached Eden Hindu Hostel sine die.⁶⁴ These actions had, however, brought sympathy for the students from the extremist political leaders and the

63. Commissioner, Calcutta Police (Sir Charles Tegart) to Chief Secretary, G. of B. letter No.1026/G. 167-28, 4 February, 1928; Chief Secretary, G. of B. to Secretary, Home (Political) Department, G. of I. letter No.1934. P, 7 February, 1928, P&J File No.445 of 1928, L/P&J/6/1947.

64. Statesman, 7 and 29 February, and 4 March, 1928.

press and pushed the activist students into the arms of Congress leaders to whom they turned for help and guidance. Subhas Bose took this opportunity to establish a closer relationship with activist students. He arranged to board Eden Hindu hostellers in a private house which soon became the rendezvous of all the activist students from different colleges in the city. He encouraged the activists, particularly those from the Presidency College who had their scores to settle with the authorities, to form a broad-based provincial organization in place of the existing Calcutta students Association. This led to the formation of the ABSA which was formally inaugurated at the All Bengal Students Conference held at Calcutta in September, 1928 under the presidency of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

At the conference an executive committee for the Association was installed and a constitution⁶⁵ adopted. All the office bearers⁶⁶ were Calcutta students, and the three top positions—that of President, Vice-President, and Secretary went to three activists—to Promode Kumar Ghosal, the expelled Secretary of the Presidency College Students Union; to Sachindra Nath Mitra, the expelled President of the Scottish Churches College; and to Birendra Nath Das Gupta, a student leader of Jadavpur (National) Engineering College and editor of ^{The} Chatra (student) who also had links with the terrorist movement.

65. For the text of the constitution see Appendix J, See also Lowman, Appendix B, P&J File No. 578, L/P&J/1976.

66. A. N. Roy, 28.

The constitution of the A.B.S.A. showed the touch of experienced hands. Modelled on the Congress constitution, it provided for a Central Council (equivalent to the B.P.C.C. or the A.I.C.C.) and a nineteen-member Working Committee. The A.B.S.A., like the Bengal Congress, assumed territorial jurisdiction over the Bengali-speaking districts of Sylhet and Cachar in the Assam province, and Manbhum in the Bihar province, besides the province of Bengal proper. Under the constitution, district branches, District Students Association (D.S.A.), assumed a key role as the sole controlling and affiliating bodies. As a result the organizational activity of the A.B.S.A. was centered upon the building up of district branches, with the consequent neglect of organizations at lower levels. By 1929, at least fifteen D.S.A.'s had been formed with over twenty-thousand members.⁶⁷ The number of these branches rose to twenty-nine⁶⁸ in 1931, only four short of the full number envisaged in the constitution.

The constitution had also dealt with the question of finance, particularly that of the D.S.A.'s and the central organization. Annual membership fees⁶⁹ and donations formed the chief sources of funds.

67. Forward, 4 January, 1929; Myron Weiner, The Politics of Scarcity, 163.

68. Annual Report of the All Bengal Students Association, March 1931, quoted in A.N.Roy, 160-61 (hereinafter Annual Report, 1931).

69. Fees included an annual primary membership fee of

It is, however, interesting to note that in its stated aims and objectives, as embodied in the constitution, the A.B.S.A. remained conveniently silent about its political role; its leaders even publicly denied that they had any. Promode Kumar Ghosal in his address of welcome as Chairman of the Reception Committee of the All Bengal Students' Conference at which the A.B.S.A. was formed disclaimed any political role ~~for~~ the A.B.S.A.; he even denied that the student participation in the anti-Simon Commission hartal of 3 February in that year had any political implications: activist students were no 'political agitators' but patriots! His whole speech was marked by a more narrowly political tone and an emphasis on refashioning the educational system to strengthen their mental and physical faculties. The constitution of the A.B.S.A. on the other hand, adopted such a laudable programme as welfare work, social reforms, rural reconstruction and physical and intellectual culture.⁷⁰ But its subsequent activities showed that this was a more subterfuge to placate moderate parents and their children, and to avoid possible government counter-action ^{rather} than an expression of genuine reformist interest in social work.

four annas per head collected by DSA's, DSA annual affiliation fee of two rupees per association and an annual central council membership fee of one rupee per head. DSA's retained three-fourths of the primary membership fee and the rest went to the central body.

70. Forward, 23 and 24 September, 1928.

If the activist students were discreet in this regard, their political mentors, Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru were not. In their speeches at the 1928 All Bengal Students Conference, Bose as a guest speaker⁷¹ and Nehru as President⁷² of the Conference, emphasised the role of students in freeing the country from an 'insolent and alien rule'. Both spoke from the higher plane of idealism extolling socialism, communism and internationalism without, however, explaining their tenets or shortcomings. Interpreting the Indian youth movement as part of the contemporary world-wide resurgence of youth against social injustices, economic exploitation and imperialism, Nehru called upon his audience to emulate the youth movement elsewhere in the world and recommended to them as their motto the fascist war-cry of Giovenezza,⁷³ youth.

The resolution passed at this Conference had also belied the stated objectives of the A.B.S.A. They made no reference to academic issues; instead they covered the whole range of political questions, pledging support for the extremist ideal of complete independence as opposed to the moderate's demand for Dominion Status, condemning the

71. For Subhas Bose's speech, see Forward, 23 September, 1928.

72. For Nehru's speech, see I.Q.R., 1928, II, 458-463.

73. Ibid, 463. Nehru further added 'Live dangerously' to be a part of that motto.

Simon Commission and those supporting and cooperating with it. Other resolutions included protests against arbitrary detention by government, the promotion and use of Swadeshi goods, and recommending students above the age of eighteen years to enroll themselves as Congress members.⁷⁴

All was not, however, long well with the A.B.S.A., for, soon after its formation, it fell prey to inner party strife and factionalism which were then so endemic in Bengal society and politics. The organisers of the A.B.S.A. were confronted by a small group of activists who, though relatively unknown to the general body of students were under the influence of more radical political views because of their close links with the Bose faction of the Bengal Congress and other militant revolutionary groups. Meanwhile, the A.B.S.A. executive became more attached to the SenGupta faction.

Cracks in the A.B.S.A. became all too visible at its annual conference at Mymensingh in 1929. The two groups had strong differences as to who should be the President of the conference. The Boseite dominated Reception Committee had decided to invite Subhas Bose to preside but the pro-SenGupta A.B.S.A. executive, with the support of a majority of its district branches, chose Dr. Muhammad Alam, a Gandhite from Lahore, who eventually presided over the

74. For the resolutions adopted at the Conference, see I.Q.R., 1928, II, 463-64.

conference much to the chagrin of Bose's followers.⁷⁵

The conference opened in a tense atmosphere, and on its second day pandemonium⁷⁶ broke out when⁷⁶ opponents of the ruling A.B.S.A. group moved a resolution demanding the appointment of a committee to draw up a fresh constitution to replace the existing one, which they complained, did not meet the aspirations of students. They demanded such changes in the constitution as would provide for more radical student activity; and as a motion of no confidence on the executive committee was about to be moved, the President of the Conference hurriedly declared the Conference closed.⁷⁷

The dissidents then formed an executive of their own, although the new committee failed to dislodge the old one which held on to power till a new executive of its choice was formed in Calcutta in November, 1929.⁷⁸

The break-away pro-Bose group then proceeded to form a separate student organization, the Bengal Presidency Students' Association (B.P.S.A.). The rival organization⁷⁹ was formed in a meeting in Calcutta on 7 December, 1929, presided by Santosh Kumar Bose, a prominent Congressman belonging to Subhas Bose faction. Despite precautionary

75. Statesman, 8 November, 1929; Annual Report, 1931, 140-41.

76. Statesman, 1 November, 1929; F.R. September (2), November (1), 1929.

77. Statesman, 1 November, 1929;

78. A.N. Roy, 50.

measures taken by the organisers of the meeting against the intrusion of the A.B.S.A. supporters by restricting entry to special pass holders, the Conference hall was invaded by a group of A.B.S.A. supporter who objected vehemently to the formation of a rival organization⁸⁰ which, they said, would divide the student community. In the ensuing scuffle amongst supporters of the rival groups, many were injured, one seriously. The President of the Conference in his efforts to save the situation from deteriorating still further, hurriedly converted the meeting into an unscheduled condolence meeting for a teacher who had died some time ago. The Conference thus ended in utter confusion.⁸¹

Coinciding with the formation of the B.P.S.A. was Subhas Bose's attempt to call a province-wide student strike, presumably to help boost its image⁸² and to demonstrate the strength of his own faction within the Congress on the eve of its Lahore session during the Christmas week of 1929. The A.B.S.A., more closely

79. Statesman, 8 November, 1929; I.Q.R., 1929, II, 22.

80. Statesman, 8 November, 1929; I.Q.R., 1929, II, 421-22.

81. Ibid.

82. B.A.R. 1928-29, XV.

linked to SenGupta's group, however, resisted the move, condemning it as a design of Bose's to use the youth movement for his own political ends,⁸³ though paradoxically enough, the A.B.S.A. itself gave a call for a strike action with the backing of SenGupta faction during the Civil Disobedience movement.⁸⁴ The A.B.S.A. had also accused the Liberty, the mouthpiece of ^{the} Bose faction of splitting the student movement in Bengal, which the latter ^{was} also attacked by the Bengal Government on similar grounds.⁸⁵

The B.P.S.A., however, maintained its existence till the early thirties, although without even assuming the leadership of the student movement in Bengal. It seemed to have remained weak organizationally, as is evident from the dearth of information about its membership, branches or even provincial executive, whether in contemporary government archives or the newspapers.

There were, doubtless, some attempts at reconciliation between the two rival student organizations. But as neither group would give way, these negotiations for a merger came to nothing. The main obstacle was the question of power sharing in an amalgamated organization.⁸⁶ The A.B.S.A.

83. B.A.R., 1928-29, XV; Annual Report, 1931, 141.

84. Statesman, 2 July, 1930; F.R. July (1), 1930.

85. B.A.R., 1928-29, XV. The Government too described Bose as the architect of the schism.

86. Annual Report, 1931, 141-42. J.M.SenGupta, in a press statement late in October, 1929 told that politicians should leave students to themselves. He, however, praised the A.B.S.A. and told that

stuck to the point that the executive, in case of merger, should be elected by a majority vote of the combined membership of the two existing student bodies. This was, however, unacceptable to the B.P.S.A. who feared that in such an event they would be outvoted by the superior numerical strength of the A.B.S.A.; they proposed, instead, to reserve the office of ^{the} President and one of the joint secretaryships for the B.P.S.A. members. They also demanded a new constitution and ^{a new} name for the proposed amalgamated body. The A.B.S.A., however, rejected these proposals as unreasonable and insisted that a compromise could take place only within the framework of the A.B.S.A. as it existed. It maintained that the B.P.S.A. members were seceders from the parent body, the A.B.S.A., to which they were welcomed back without any string attached by either side.⁸⁷ Evidently, the A.B.S.A. was negotiating from a position of strength; its network of district branches and moderate programme had attracted a larger membership from the districts than did the newly-formed B.P.S.A. which had fewer district branches.

the dispute was on technical points. Without naming Bose or his faction, SenGupta told that the situation was the creation of outside influence. Statesman, 26 October, 1929.

87. This is the A.B.S.A. version. See Annual Report, 1931, 141-42. We lack the B.P.S.A. version to compare with it, however.

The rival parties retained their separate existence with renewed bitterness which occasionally culminated in open clashes such as the one that took place in April, 1931 at Mymensingh.⁸⁸ It again centred on the question of the presidency and also on the venue of a student conference. The Mymensingh district branch of the A.B.S.A., with the support of the local pro-SenGupta Congress faction, had decided to hold the Conference at Mymensingh on 24 April with J. M. SenGupta presiding. On the other hand, the local B.P.S.A. branch, backed by the local pro-Bose Congressmen wanted the conference to be held alongside the District Political Sufferers' Conference at the subdivisional town of Netrokona in the same district on 26 April; J. M. SenGupta was to preside over this conference there. Purna Chandra Das, leader of the Madaripur group of the Yugāntar terrorist party was invited to preside over the proposed Students Conference at Netrokona.⁸⁹ The supporters of the B.P.S.A. and Bose disrupted the Mymensingh Conference by forcibly preventing J. M. SenGupta's presence at the Conference hall. This they did by surrounding the house of his host, Dr. Bepin Behari Sen, a leading physician and a Congress leader of the district, and threatening

88. Statesman, 25 April, 1931; See also 'Political Notes' column, Ibid., 29 April, 1931.

89. See 'Political Notes' column, Ibid., 29 April, 1931.

SenGupta with physical violence.⁹⁰ The organizer of the Mymensingh conference promptly retaliated by intercepting⁹¹ Purna Chandra Das, the President-elect of the Netrokona Students Conference, who was on his way to the conference venue from Calcutta by train. He was, however, released on the intervention of the elders of the SenGupta faction and was thus able to reach the conference well on time.⁹²

There was no broad-based student activity in the province till early in 1930 when the Congress under Gandhi's leadership started the Civil Disobedience movement. The organizational rivalry between ^{the} two groups of students in Calcutta and elsewhere, and more importantly the comparative political quiescence were largely responsible for this lull. Local incidents of student action in protest against specific grievances were not, however, completely absent in the interim period. For instance, for the whole of 1928, City College became the focal point of strikes and Satyagraha by its Hindu students. It all started as a sequel to disciplinary action⁹³ taken against half a dozen of them for holding a Sarswati Puja at the Rammohan Roy hostel in violation of college rules, and the non-idolatrous

90. F.R. April (2), 1931. The District Magistrate offered him police protection but SenGupta refused on the ground that it was a 'meaningful ebullition'. See also SenGupta's press statement, Statesman, 25 April, 1931.

91. Statesman, 29 April, 1931.

92. Ibid.

93. 'Political Notes' column, Ibid., 25 May, 1928.

doctrines of the Sādhāran Brāhmo Samāj whose institution this was. The Hindu students, backed by their guardians and by politicians like Subhas Bose and Jitendralal Banerjee, continued their strike for eight long months to establish their right to worship in the campus;⁹⁴ they, however, failed in their demand, and a large number of them left the college on the advice of the elder leaders.⁹⁵

There were also strikes at the Presidency College and at the St. Xavier's College in 1929. The strike at the former was sparked off by the imposition of collective fines on the Eden Hindu hostellers and the expulsion of about forty of their member for taking part in what may be termed as a Bengali counterpart of the Irish 'wake' in connection with the commemoration of the suicide of a fellow resident some two years before.⁹⁶ The strike action at St. Xavier's College, too, followed the expulsion of certain students after disturbances at the Rector's day⁹⁷ function in August, 1929. The A.B.S.A. played a prominent part in both strikes.

Statesman, 22 July, 1928, 9 August, 1928.

94. Ibid., 9 August, 1928.

95. Heremba Chandra Maitra, Principal, City College, letter to Statesman, 22 April, 1928; Ibid., 9 August, 1928.

96. Ibid., 22 August, 3, 4 and 6 September, 1929.

97. Ibid., 21, 23 August, 4, 5 and 6 September, 1929.

The Bengal students came to the forefront of political agitation during the Civil Disobedience movement early in 1930. Students in various educational institutions observed 26 January, 1930 as India's independence day in accordance with a Congress directive.⁹⁸ The A.B.S.A. had its representatives⁹⁹ on the Bengal Civil Disobedience Council, formed by the SenGupta faction as opposed to the Boseite-dominated B.P.C.C., which responded in lukewarm fashion to the call for mass action. Moreover, the A.B.S.A. had also formed an independent committee of its own for the same purpose.¹⁰⁰ It held a special students convention on 6 April, 1930, the day Gandhi inaugurated the salt Satyagraha by making contraband salt, to decide on its own course of action. The convention, presided ^{over} by J. M. SenGupta, and attended by a number of Congressmen of his group, pledged full support to the Congress' programme and called upon the students of the province to enroll as Congress volunteers for this purpose.¹⁰¹

Soon after these decisions were taken, educational institutions in the province were closed for the summer

98. F.R. January (2), February (2), March (1), 1930; I.Q.R., 1930, I, 21.

99. I.Q.R., 1930, I, 21.

100. A.N. Roy, 55.

101. Statesman, 7 April, 1930; I.Q.R., 1930, I, 356.

vacation, and the full weight of their impact was not felt in Calcutta until the commencement of the new University term in the first week of July. The vacation had, however, enabled the Congress leaders in some districts to requisition students' services for propaganda and for picketing of excise shops and law courts which formed an integral part of their Civil Disobedience programme.¹⁰² Meanwhile, the A.B.S.A. had formed in Calcutta a student volunteer corps, the Bengal Militia, some of whom joined the salt Satyagraha camp at Mahisbathan in the 24 Parganas district under the command of Satish Das Gupta, the President of the Bengal Civil Disobedience Council.¹⁰³ Students and youth from various northern and eastern districts, on the other hand, converged on Contai and Tamluk in Midnapur district for a similar purpose.¹⁰⁴ At Dacca and Calcutta a number of students engaged spasmodically in somewhat innocuous anti-government activities, like reading out in public extracts from proscribed literature¹⁰⁵ in defiance of the law of sedition, and by cutting down branches of trees¹⁰⁶ on public thoroughfares in defiance of the forest

102. F.R. May (2), 1930. The report spoke of 'general abstention of college students as distinct from school boys from political movements.'

103. Annual Report, 1931, 146-48.

104. See F.R.'s April-July, 1930.

105. 'Memoirs of a life as a police officer in India, 1907-59', MSS, Gordon Papers, CSAS, Cambridge, 91, 92; Statesman, 12 April, 1930; Statesman, 17 April, 20 April, 1930.

106. Statesman, 20 April, 1930.

laws. Their acts, nevertheless, at times, led to strong police counter action such as batton charges to disperse unlawful crowds and the arrest of the culprits.¹⁰⁷

With the reopening of educational institutions after the summer recess, the A.B.S.A. held a students' meeting at Calcutta under the chairmanship of Mrs. C.R. Das, and decided, not without some argument, to boycott schools, colleges and university examinations during the period of civil disobedience.¹⁰⁸ As a result strong picket lines appeared in front of the various Calcutta and Dacca colleges at their reopening, and a large number of students went on strike, boycotting their annual examinations.¹⁰⁹ The candidates of the M.A., M.Sc. and Law examinations at Dacca and Calcutta were forcibly prevented from taking their examinations. At both places, groups of activist students invaded the examination halls and disrupted the examinations by seizing question papers and answer scripts from the examinees.¹¹⁰

107. 'Memoirs of a life as a police officer in India', Gordon Papers, C.S.A.S., Cambridge, 91.

108. Statesman, 2 July, 1930; I.Q.R., 1930, II, 2.

109. Statesman, 2, 3 and 6 July, 1930; B.A.R., 1929-30, XVIII-XIX; F.R. July (1), 1930.

Pamphlets were issued arguing that students could not take their examinations when many of them were in prison. See proscribed Bengali leaflet 'Banglar Chhatra Bandhuganer Prati' (To our student friends of Bengal' and 'Student of Bengal, Remember thy Brothers and Sisters who are in Jails—Country needs you'. P&J File No.4580 of 1929, L/P&J/6/1991.

110. B.A.R., 1929-30, XIX; Statesman, 8, 11 and 22 July, 1930.

As a result these examinations were deferred¹¹¹ to a later date. The same story of coercion was repeated elsewhere in the province, although violence was less marked in the eastern than in the western districts, particularly in Calcutta.¹¹²

The boycott of educational institutions and the participation of students¹¹³ in other form of civil disobedience did not, however, receive the approval of the general body of students and their parents. Even the Congressmen themselves were divided on this issue, some openly opposing it. For instance, Jagendra Chandra Chakravarty, a confirmed Swarajist and 'senior member of the Dinajpur district bar, addressed a letter to all Bar Libraries in Bengal arguing against the student involvement in the Congress agitation and urging upon Congress leaders to leave students to themselves.¹¹⁴ At Dacca, parents and guardians of the students of the Intermediate Government College called in a meeting in August, 1930 at which they

111. Statesman, 11 and 22 July, 1930.

112. B.A.R., 1929-30, XIX; F.R. July (1), 1930.

113. According to government estimate 2,360 college students (460 from Government and 1,900 from aided colleges) and 10,700 high school boys (900 from government and 9,800 from aided schools) absented from classes for about a month. D.P.I. 1930, 31, 47.

114. Statesman, 9 April, 1930.

expressed their opposition to pickets at the college gate and asked the local Congress Committee and others responsible to withdraw all pickets from there.¹¹⁵

On the other hand government counter action such as pressure on the educational authorities, particularly in the private sector, by making grants-in-aid conditional on the good conduct of governing bodies and managing committees and also of teachers and students, proved useful. The government also made the use of school premises for political meetings and demonstrations, punishable by the withdrawal of all government aid; and they did withhold payment of some Rs.1,29,000 to non-governmental institutions in 1930.¹¹⁶ The full rigour of the law, on the other hand, brought to bear upon activist students in the form of arrest and imprisonment¹¹⁷ worked as an effective deterrent for the waverers. Moreover the tactful handling of the situation by the University authorities demonstrated to the students and general public that they were determined

115. Statesman, 7 August, 1930.

116. Ibid., 25 June, 21 November, 1930.

117. According to unofficial sources over 3000 A.B.S.A. members suffered imprisonment during the first phase of the civil disobedience (1930-31). See C.R. Reddy's speech at an All Bengal Students Conference in March, 1931. I.Q.R., 1931, I, 360.

to keep educational institutions open; at the same time by keeping the police presence to a minimum they denied the activists their martyrs' colour. Thus immediately after the A. B. S. A's boycott decision, the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, Dr. W. S. Ugrahurt, in an open letter, appealed to students for reason.¹¹⁸ Assuring activist students that no compulsion would be used to force them to attend classes, nor any disciplinary action against the recalcitrant either by the University or by its constituent colleges, he asked in return that they for their part should accept the same code of conduct by refraining from coercing students who wanted to carry on with their work unhindered. This policy of conciliation rather than of confrontation on the part of University authorities, much to the dismay of the A. B. S. A. and Congress leaders, robbed the activist students of room to manoeuvre,¹¹⁹ for it was probably the prospect of a direct clash with the authorities that had fired student enthusiasm. It was the same tough but conciliatory attitude that saved the day in a highly explosive situation when a student was killed¹²⁰ in a police action in

118. Statesman, 6 July, 1930.

119. This^{is} evident from the reaction of Dr. B. C. Roy, a prominent Congressmen who resigned from the office of Fellow of Calcutta University in protest against what he termed as the 'unusual and unprecedented' communication of the Vice-Chancellor; he further added that he could not be a party to it as a member of the Congress Working Committee. [Ibid], 6 July, 1930.

120. Ibid. 26 July, 1930; The Modern Review, XLVIII,

front of Dacca University on 21 July, 1930. By the end of July the boycott had failed,¹²¹ and most of the striking students had returned to their schools and colleges, although those firmly committed continued with their activities like the boycott of British goods and ^{the picketing of} liquor shops till March, 1931, when Civil Disobedience was finally brought to an end by an agreement between Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, and Gandhi.

The resumption of the Civil Disobedience campaign by Gandhi early in 1932 had again activated students in Bengal. Toeing the Congress line, the A.B.S.A, now free from restraints, formed a three-member Students' War Council,¹²² a student high command, to direct and

2 August, 1930, 244 (see editorial article), V to S. of S. telegram No.D.5457 Poll., 26 July, 1930, L/P&J/6/1970.

Another similar situation was overcome by Calcutta University authorities after the police made a baton charge on the campus injuring some students. The University authorities publicly criticised the police action and obtained the guarantee from the Governor that police would not in future enter the campus without prior permission of the University authorities. The government had also dropped charges against one student arrested during the police action. This pacified the angry students of the University. Statesman, 10, 12, 20 and 21 September, 1930; The Modern Review, XLVIII, 4, October, 1930, 473-475; I.Q.R., 1930, II, 22.

121. The A.B.S.A. had formally withdrawn its sanction against educational authorities in November, 1930. A.N. Roy, 72.

122. 'A Brief Report of the Activities of the Students' War Council' (hereinafter Students' War Council) in A.N. Roy, 105.

regulate students' anti-government activities, then mostly confined to Calcutta. The government were, however, determined not to allow the agitation any fresh lease of life. The prompt and sharp government counter measures banning¹²³ both A.B.S.A. and the Students' War Council along with many other youth and Congress organizations in the province, followed by numerous arrests and convictions, proved too hard for the civil resisters to digest. Sporadic student activities still took place¹²⁴ but they soon abated as the Congress movement had again to be called off by Gandhi in June, 1932. The morale of many student activists had by then fallen sharply in the face of continued government coercion ; by 1934, the A.B.S.A. , still under government ban, had become moribund. The next phase of the student movement in Bengal was linked with the formation of the All India Students Federation and its split on ideological issues.

The next phase of the student movement in Bengal was related to the activities of the All-India Students Federation (AISF), the first such formed in August, 1936 and conceived as the student wing of the Indian nationalist movement. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the President of

123. The Calcutta Gazette, Extraordinary, 9 January, 1932.

124. For A.B.S.A. version of their activities during the second phase of the civil disobedience, see Students War Council, 164-83.

Muslim League, presided over the All-India Students inaugural conference at Lucknow on 19 August, 1936, and Jawaharlal Nehru addressed the student gathering there.¹²⁵ The Hindu students, at this time, however, were divided in their loyalties between the Congress, its various leftist groups like the Congress Socialist Party, formed in 1934, the Forward Bloc, formed in 1939, and the outlawed Communist Party of India.¹²⁶

The most marked division in the A.I.S.F. was, however, its split into nationalist and pro-communist groups—¹²⁷ the minority pro-communist group was led by a Bengali, Hirandranath Chatterjee.¹²⁸ The first open rift took place at the A.I.S.F. session in Madras in 1938 where, failing to carry a resolution in adulation of the newly-promulgated Soviet constitution, the pro-communist group held a separate conference. Next year at the Federation's Calcutta session, the pro-communist group made a determined, although unsuccessful effort, to pack the executive of the A.I.S.F. with such students ~~as~~ were either committed¹²⁹ or had communist leanings. The split finally occurred at the

125. M. Weiner, The Politics of Scarcity, 163; Altbach, 85; A. B. Shinde, Political Consciousness Among College Students, 156.

126. Altbach, 118, 120.

127. It is doubtful if many of the communist-inspired students, except the hardcore leaders, had any deep ideological conviction. In Calcutta the Workers' and Peasant Party disseminated communist doctrines among students in the 1920's.

128. Later became a communist M. P. from West Bengal.

Nagpur session of the Federation in 1940; both groups, however, continued using the same party name, the A.I.S.F., till 1945, when the nationalist group formed its independent organization, the All India Students' Congress, with Humayun Kabir as its President. The A.I.S.F., now became purely a communist student organization.¹²⁹

One important feature of the student movement in Bengal in the 1920's and 1930's was the almost complete abstention of Muslim students testified to by the government reports of the period.¹³⁰ The most plausible explanation for it was, of course, the lack of communication, and political and social cleavage between the Hindu and the Muslim communities which had been greatly increased by the question of power sharing under dyarchy. Muslim politicians in Bengal and elsewhere generally followed a policy of cooperation with the government, avoiding the Congress tactics of confrontation and obstruction. The measure of success achieved by Bengal Muslim politicians in persuading government to make more jobs and representation on the legislature available to their community was probably an inducement to Muslim students and their parents

129. Myron Weiner, 164; Altbach, 86-88; 120-21; Shinde, 157-58.

130. B.A.R., 1929-30, XIV.

to stay clear of trouble.¹³¹ An instance of this process is the Bengal Muslim leaders' success in getting twenty-five per cent. of the seats at the Bengal Engineering College Shilpur and at the Ahsanullah School of Engineering at Dacca allotted to Muslim candidates.¹³²

To turn to the student community, there were far fewer Muslim than Hindu students; the fewer came in the main from the rural areas, and poverty prevented most of them from going on to the high schools and colleges in towns which were the main centres of student activity. Those Muslim students who did reach college were probably more career-minded, and under the pressure of their non-political parents, avoided political activity. The use of Hindu symbolism and the idea of Hindu revivalism so typical of the Bengal student movement could have been in some way responsible for the absence of Muslim participation.

As already noted Muslim parents and politicians generally kept students out of politics. On occasions, Muslim political leaders, however, did use students of the community in fostering their personal ambition against their co-religionist rivals, but not in anti-government agitation. For instance, in 1927 some Calcutta Muslim

131. BLCP., 1927, XXVI, 56-57.

132. D. P. I's letter No. 6T, 29 September, 1924, BLCP., 1927, XXVI, 101-102.

students, particularly of the Calcutta Madrassah, demonstrated¹³³ against A.K. Ghuznavi for becoming a government minister with Byomkes Chakravarty; for, it was the latter's refusal together with other Hindu MLC's to join the ministry with Sir Abdur Rahim that forced him (Rahim) to resign within a few days of taking office.

Meanwhile Muslim parents and politicians, became increasingly worried at the impact of general student politics, particularly after the formation of the A.B.S.A., on the youths of their community. So the Muslim students of Bengal met at Dacca¹³⁴ on 13 July, 1930, presumably under the patronage of the political backers of their community. At this meeting, Dr. Shahidullah, a teacher who presided over it, was empowered to help organise a Muslim Students Association as soon as possible. The timing of the meeting, which had coincided with the A.B.S.A.'s intensive Civil Disobedience activities from which the Muslim leaders had steadfastly stood aloof, was significant. The meeting passed a resolution expressing sympathy with all legitimate and constitutional means for the fulfilment of national aspirations but strongly urging Muslim students not to take part in the boycott of educational institutions which was detrimental to the national interest and that of

133. Statesman, 2 February, 1927.

134. Ibid., 16 July, 1930.

the Muslim community in particular.¹³⁵

The early history of the All Bengal Muslim Students' Association is rather obscure; it was not probably formed until 1932. Meanwhile an All Bengal Muslim Students Conference was held in Calcutta early in October, 1931,¹³⁶ under the presidency of Lt. Col. H. Suhrawardy, the first Muslim Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. He advised students to eschew politics and resist all outside interference in the pursuit of their education. The Chairman of the Reception Committee, Habibur Rahman, in his address of welcome dealt with such subjects as had a direct bearing on education. He stressed the need of expansion of education amongst Muslims in Bengal and on that of reorganization of Madrassah education so as to bring it to the level of the needs of the time.

It is evident from the activities of the A. B. M. S. A., which from 1933 received a wider coverage from the press, particularly from the Star of India, then the only Muslim English daily newspaper, that it worked under the direct patronage and supervision of the older Muslim leaders. For instance, in 1933 all the offices of Hooghly Muslim Students Association except that of Secretary, which went to a student, were held by teachers of different schools and

135. Statesman, 16 July, 1930.

136. Ibid., 4 October, 1931.

colleges, that of President by a Professor of Hooghly College.¹³⁷ The list of office bearers of A.B.M.S.A. for 1935-36,¹³⁸ too, showed the same pattern. The returning officers appointed by the A.B.M.S.A. for conducting elections into its district branches, of which there were quite a few by then, were either Muslim teachers of local schools and colleges or government officials. When the A.B.M.S.A. announced in June, 1935 that the Second All Bengal Muslim Students Conference was to be held soon at Mymensingh, the Star of India wrote editorially¹³⁹ that it was a happy sign that 'the Conference will not deal with political matters' adding that subjects like detenues, constitutional changes and Communal Award were 'clearly beyond the legitimate scope of student conferences. Muslim students, it held, were not to emulate undesirable examples set up by others, and not to pass judgement over educational policies chalked out by their elders. They should rather

137. Star of India, 7 September, 1933.

138. Ibid, 21 September, 1935. The office-bearers of A.B.M.S.A. were as follows: President: M.A.H. Ispahani, Calcutta merchant and politician. Vice-Presidents: K. Nooruddin, Editor, Star of India; Prof. Abu Hena; Dr. Qudrat-e-Khuda, both Islamia College teachers. Secretary: A. Wasequ, a law student, later a Muslim Leaguer, and an M.P. in Pakistan in 1951.

139. Star of India, 5 June, 1935. The leader-article was entitled 'When Students Meet'. This was followed by another article 'Need for a Correct Idealism', Ibid, 30 August, 1935.

find out the causes of their relative backwardness to other communities in education and wealth, and their remedies.

It laid great stress on character building.¹⁴⁰

The Conference, which, however, did not take place till the beginning of September, 1935,¹⁴¹ was presided over by A. F. Rahman,¹⁴² the Vice-Chancellor of Dacca University, and inaugurated by Khan Bahadur Azizul Haque, the provincial Education Minister.¹⁴³ Despite long preparation by its organizers and the advance publicity¹⁴⁴ it got in the Star of India, the number of delegates from other districts was rather small,¹⁴⁵ partly due to a general apathy of Muslim students to politics and partly due to organizational defects and lack of funds. The Chairman of the Reception Committee emphasised the need of Muslim students' to be aware of the current politics of the country, without, however, actually participating in it.¹⁴⁶ It is interesting to note that besides educationists like Ibrahim Khan, Principal, Karatia College, and Kumudbandhu

140. Star of India, 5 June, 1935.

141. The delay was due to heavy preoccupations of the Vice-Chancellor of Dacca University and the Education Minister.

142. Star of India, 2 September, 1935.

143. Ibid.

144. The Star of India carried notices about the conference, see Ibid., 23, 24 and 27 August, 1935.

145. Ibid., 2 September, 1935.

146. Ibid., 2 September, 1935.

Chakravarti, Principal local A. M. College, the guest speakers also included the Additional District Superintendent of Police,¹⁴⁷ a Muslim, which would probably have been unthinkable in an A. B. S. A. conference.

The resolutions passed at the conference—not without some political colour—reflected the promptings of older Muslim leaders. For instance, the implementation of the Bengal Rural Primary Education Act^{of 1930} and the removal of rural indebtedness, two favourite topics of discussion among the Muslim leaders both within the provincial legislature and without, were the subjects of two of the many resolutions passed at this conference.¹⁴⁸

It must, however, be noted here that like the A. B. S. A. the A. B. M. S. A. too fell victim to personal rivalries of the adult leaders of the community, particularly in Calcutta. The A. B. M. S. A. at this stage was, doubtless, under the influence of orthodox Muslim leaders like M. A. H. Ispahani, a rich Calcutta merchant, who was also its President in 1935-36, and the Dacca Nawabs who had a preponderant control in the management of the Star of India. Other Muslim leaders such as A. K. Fazlul Haq and H. S. Suhrawardy too were at that time making serious attempts at establishing

147. Star of India, 2 September, 1935.

148. Ibid.

links with the students of their community as personal and group rivalries of various leaders became fiercer with the provincial elections under the new Government of India Act, 1935 drawing near. Under this Act the number of Muslim voters in the new Legislative Assembly had increased more than seven fold¹⁴⁹ over what it had been under the 1919 Act; ninety-five¹⁵⁰ per cent. of the Muslim seats, on the other hand, now came from rural constituencies. Muslim students and youths were therefore looked upon by their urban leaders and prospective legislative candidates as useful links between themselves and the peasant voters.

Thus under pressures from rival political leaders, the Muslim students became divided amongst themselves. The dissensions within their organisation became publicly visible early in 1936 when two students, presumably residents either of the Taylor and Carmichael hostel in Calcutta, in a letter to the Star of India questioned the unrepresentative character of the A. B. M. S. A. which, they claimed, was managed by persons who were not bona fide

149. Under the 1919 Act, there were 465,127 Muslim voters at the 1920 election, under the 1935 Act the number rose to 3458364. Return showing the Results of Elections in India, 1921, Cmd. 1261, XXVI, 10-13. Return showing the Results of Election in India, 1937 cmd. 5589, XXI, 40-52.

150. Under the 1919 Act there were 33 Muslim rural constituency seats and 6 urban constituency seats, under the 1935 Act, the number of rural constituency seats had risen to 111, the number of urban constituency seats remaining the same. Ibid.

students.¹⁵¹ It all started following the formation, at a meeting of the A. B. M. S. A., of a provisional reception committee for the coming Muslim Students' Conference, an annual event of the A. B. M. S. A., which it was proposed should be held in Calcutta at a later date.¹⁵² The protest letter described the meeting and its proceedings forming the provisional reception committee as 'absolutely bogus',¹⁵³ as Muslim students from many institutions, including those from Taylor and Carmichael hostels, were neither invited nor present; it called for the dissolution and replacement of the provisional reception committee by a truly representative committee. The reply to this letter denying all the allegations raised in it and upholding the validity of both the provisional reception committee and the meeting at which it was formed, came from the student Vice-President of the Islamia College Union.¹⁵⁴ The wrangling over the provisional reception committee, however, continued for some time till it was laid to rest by moving the conference

151. 'Letter to the Editor', Star of India, 25 April, 1936.

152. This was decided at a meeting at M. A. H. Ispahani's on 9 April, 1936. Ibid, 13 April, 1936.

153. Ibid, 24 April, 1936.

154. Ibid, 6 May, 1935. . It seems from it that one reason of the rift was the rivalry between Islamia College students and the residents of Taylor and the Carmichael hostels for the control of the A. I. M. S. F.

venue from Calcutta to Bogra, a small district town in north Bengal; a new reception committee, although still retaining the control of the A. B. M. S. A. and of course, to the exclusion of the dissenters, was formed for the Bogra conference held late in September, 1936.

The Bogra Muslim Students Conference, held under the chairmanship of Khwaja Habibullah, the young Nawab of Dacca, passed some thirty resolutions.¹⁵⁵ It seems the conference was used as a platform for electioneering on behalf of the United Muslim Party, of which the Nawab was the President, against the rival the Krishak Proja Party of which A. K. Fazlul Haq was the leader. Some of the resolutions passed such as urging government to earmark a quota of services according to the population of respective communities, to grant proportionate representation of Muslims on the governing bodies and Text Book Committees,¹⁵⁶ could well have formed the election manifesto of the party. Barely a month before, the Star of India complained editorially of 'Exploitation of Students',¹⁵⁷ by politicians following a reception accorded to Jinnah by Calcutta Muslim students, principally under the initiative of some Carmichael hostel residents: A. K. Fazlul Haq presided over the reception meeting, the address of welcome was read by

155. Star of India, 10 October, 1936.

156. Ibid.

157. Ibid., 24 August, 1936.

1. See leading article, 'Exploitation of Students'.

Jehangir Kabir, General Secretary of the leftist Radical Party and the vote of thanks was moved by Humayun Kabir,¹⁵⁸ who later became the Deputy Minister for Education, Government of India. The Star of India took exception to the socialistic tone of the address presented to Jinnah.¹⁵⁹ All in all, the Bengali Muslim Students had now been dragged into politics by the leaders of their community.

Many Bengali Muslim students joined the All India Muslim Students Federation (A. I. M. S. F.) which had come to work as the student wing of the All India Muslim League. Inaugurating the A. I. M. S. F. in 1937 M. A. Jinnah, the Muslim League President, stressed the need for a separate anti-Congress Muslim Student movement. A counter organization, the All India Nationalist Muslim Students' Federation, was promptly formed by the Congressite Muslim leaders; it, however, did not have any success either in Bengal or elsewhere.¹⁶⁰ The first branch of the A. I. M. S. F. in Bengal was probably formed some time in 1937.

158. Star of India, 10 & 19 August, 1936.

159. Ibid, 24 August, 1936.

160. Altbach, 178.

Chapter IVPOLITICS AND VIOLENCE

Political terrorism resorted to in Bengal at the turn of this century by a youthful section of the bhadralok class, utilising the anti-partition agitation of 1905-11 as their rationale, formed a very distinctive aspect of Bengali politics during the closing decades of British rule in India. The period of terrorism here under study covers the final and most intensive phase of political violence in Bengal. Mounting terrorist activity, especially after the spectacular raid on two government armouries in Chittagong in 1930, presented the government with a situation at once challenging and difficult to resolve. The wealth of contemporary government records,¹ private collections² and newspaper reports, as well

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1. For instance, Public and Judicial Proceedings; Government of India. Confidential (Political) Proceedings; annual Report[s] on the Police Administration in the Bengal Presidency; Annual Report[s] on the Police Administration in the Town and Suburb of Calcutta; annual Report[s] on the Administration of Bengal; Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform; Report of the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform (Session 1933-34), II. Records and Report of the Committee appointed to investigate Revolutionary Conspiracies in India, cmd. 9190 (1918).
 2. For example, Papers of Frederick Edwin Smith, the first Earl of Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, 1924 to 1928, India Office Record (IOR) Mss. Eur.D. 703; Papers of Sir Robert Neil Reid, I. C. S., Governor of Assam, 1937 to 1942 and Acting Governor of Bengal,

as the numerous reminiscences of ex-terrorists and writings on the topic mostly in Bengali, produced by other authors during the last twenty years or so, bear testimony to the significance of the terrorist problem in Bengal. The normal provisions of the Penal Code seemed inadequate to meet the exigencies of the situation; and the government felt compelled to take quick recourse to strong countermeasures of arrest, detention, strict censorship of the Press and other forms of bans and restrictions under powers assumed under extraordinary Ordinances and legislative acts³ specially designed to deal with terrorism. Such measures, however, often brought adverse reaction from the bhadra press and platforms as also from within the legislature, and at times they seemed politically counterproductive. Every escalation of terrorism, nonetheless, was met with tougher government actions till the government established the upperhand on the situation.

In this chapter, it is proposed to discuss the different facets of the terrorist campaign in Bengal and the methods the government employed to deal with it. In doing so, we will begin

1938 to 1939, I. O. R. Mss. Eur. E. 278; Papers of Sir Charles A. Tegart, IPS, Commissioner, Calcutta Police, 1923 to 1931, Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS), Cambridge; Papers of Major D. F. Gordon, Deputy Commissioner, Calcutta Police, CSAS; Papers of E. B. H. Baker, ICS, Deputy Commandant, Hijli and Buxa Detention Camps, CSAS.

3. See Appendix^{II} for a comprehensive list of Ordinances and legislative acts in this regard.

with a brief resume in general terms of the metamorphosis of the terrorist campaign prior to 1927 from where the present study begins. Terrorism made its advent in Bengal as an emotive and religio-cultural creed, characterised by its inseparable link with the Hindu cult of Shakti, personified in Kāli, the traditional Brahmanical goddess of 'Divine Destruction' and 'Cosmic Renewal',⁴ and by its goal of Dharmarājya Samsthāpan⁵ (Kingdom of righteousness) i. e. the restoration of Hindu paramountcy based on cultural and religious revivalism. According to Bhupendra Nath Dutt,⁶ an important member of the terrorist campaign in Bengal in its formative stage, who later forsook violence, terrorism owed its life in Bengal chiefly to the 'emotional', 'imaginative' and 'nervous' traits of the Bengali character,⁷ a view which was also shared by the

4. J.H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth century Bengal, 30.
5. Bhupendra Nath Dutt, Aprakāshita Rājnaitik Itihās (unpublished Political History), 54; Nalini Kishore Guha, Bāmtay Biplabbād (the Revolutionary Concept in Bengal), 87.
6. Bhupendra Nath Dutt (1880-1961), son of Calcutta solicitor, younger brother of Vivekananda and Kayasth by caste, joined the terrorist campaign in 1902 soon after passing the Matriculation examination from the Metropolitan Institute, Calcutta. One of the main enthusiasts in bringing out the first weekly revolutionary organ, Yugāntar in Bengali in 1906, he was its editor from its inception till a new management took over in 1907. He fled to America in 1908 after serving one year's imprisonment on a charge of sedition. There he graduated from New York University in 1912 and later did his Ph.D. from Hamburg University in Germany in 1923. He returned to India in 1925 with a socialist orientation and joined the Indian National Congress. Later he became more involved in labour and peasant movements.

Calcutta University Commission, 1919.⁸ The protagonists of the terrorist campaign in their recruitment drives initially banked largely on the exploitation of Bengali feeling about the hated jibe of bābu verbosity and unmanliness. In this connection it is illuminating to recall Dutt's account of how he himself and many of his comrades had found themselves caught up within the terrorist movement under the influence of a fanciful story which formed the stock-in-trade of numerous early terrorist recruiters. The story⁹ which he claimed to have heard directly from Aurobindo Ghose's mouth was that the saints on the banks of the Narmada in the Deccan had learnt through their spiritualism that a boy, born in a certain Suryya Bamsa (Sun dynasty) in Rajputana was destined to seize power as King of India through a rebellion in 1906. Accordingly, an all-India revolutionary organization was set up to bring the rebellion about with its headquarters in Maharashtra and branches in all parts of the country, except Bengal, where there was no response from the cowardly Bengali youth.

7. Dutt, 11.

8. C.U.C.R., 1, 1, 111.

9. Dutt, 9-10.

Over-sensitive to ridicule, prone to 'forming too favourable an estimate of their own attainments and powers' and equally vulnerable to a 'quick discouragement',¹⁰ Bengali youths promptly reacted to this and joined the terrorist ranks to clear their names of the stigma of cowardliness. Their terrorist involvement was also partly due, as the Calcutta University Commission had pointed out, to their capacity for 'devotion to a brotherhood' under the impulse of a 'passionately-felt political ideal' and to their courage and 'endurance of pain' in pursuance of that ideal.¹¹

Political violence, however, was but an off-shoot of a wider Indian political extremism, an attitude adopted with the growth of cultural nationalism with the growing extremism among the educated Hindu middle class in the late nineteenth century and which had found expression in such activities as Rajnarayan Bose's¹² projected 'Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal'¹³ in

10. CUCR, I.I, 111.

11. Ibid.

12. Rajnarayan Bose (1826-1899), Kayasth, was the son of Nandakishore Bose, a Secretary of Rammohan Roy. Educated at David Hare School and the Hindu College, he joined the Brahmo movement, and in 1871 became the President of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. He began his career in 1849 as a teacher of English at Sanskrit College, and in 1851 he was appointed as Head Master of Midnapur Government School, a post he held for the next nineteen years. It was at Midnapur that his nationalist ideas crystalised and he conceived of the plan of promoting national sentiments, dress and literature. He was also the founder of the Sanjibani Sabha (Life-resuscitating

1866 and in the institution of the Hindu Melā¹⁴ started in 1867. Originally started as Chaitra Melā,¹⁵ owing the name to the Bengali calender month of Chaitra, corresponding to April-May, its name was changed to Hindu Melā as a protest against the Native Marriage Act of 1872. The Melā served as a platform for the dissemination of patriotic sentiments among the bhadralok for about fourteen years, ceasing to exist in 1880.

Poets, literati and religious and political leaders of the period alike indulged in one or other sort of atavism and focussed on militant religious images and evocative symbolism to rouse popular feeling. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee,¹⁶ a retired Deputy Collector and novelist, for instance, preached the cult of 'Mother India' or the 'Mother Goddess' personified in the Hindu goddess,

society) somewhat on the carbonari model but with none of pungency or acerbity. He was the maternal grandfather of Aurobindo Ghose.

13. For the text of the prospectus of the proposed society, see Jogesh Chandra Bagal, Hindu Melār Itibritta (History of the Hindu Melā), 91-101.
14. For the history of the Hindu Melā, see ibid.
15. The Melā was held for the first time on the day of Chaitra Samkranti, i.e. the last day of the last Bengali calender month of Chaitra, 1274 (Bengali era) corresponding to 12 April, 1867. Later the Melā was brought forward by two months to the day of Magh Samkranti, a time-table maintained till 1878 whence the Melā was synchronised with the occasion of Swarsati Pujā (the worship of the Hindu goddess of learning). This arrangement continued till its fourteenth, and probably the last session in 1880. See Jogesh Chandra Bagal.
16. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, (1838-1894), Brahmin, was one of the first two graduates of Calcutta University, both of whom passed the B.A. examination in 1858. Starting his career as a Sub-Inspector of Police, he rose to the position of Deputy Collector. He was made a Rai Bahadur in 1892 and decorated with a C.I.E. in 1894. He, however,

Durgā. In his novel, Ānandamath¹⁷ (the Abbey of Bliss), he preached the idea of raising a puritanically-trained and secretly-armed guerilla band to secure the political and cultural regeneration of India, an idea which supplied the model for terrorist organizations in Bengal. The wide audience for the novel is evident from the fact that a poem in it, Bande Mātaram (Mother, I hail thee!) became the Marsaillaise of the Hindu nationalists and a war-cry of the Bengali terrorists. It was after the idea of anushilan or the model of moral and physical culture preached in the novel that the first terrorist organization was organised and named.¹⁸ About the same time, Vivekananda,¹⁹ at once a Hindu reformer and a revivalist, who had made himself famous by asserting the superiority of Hindu culture and spiritualism at the First Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 was infusing Hinduism with a flamboyant nationalism by such aggressive utterances as 'up India and conquer the world with your spirituality'.²⁰

made his name as a writer. The novel, Ānandamath particularly endeared him to the bhadraklok. For its influence, see T.W.Clark ed. The Novel in India, 64—'Patriotism who unequivocally identified with Hinduism.'

17. First published in 1882 when 1850 copies were printed, it reached a tenth edition in 1927, and a twelfth in 1932. In the preface to the first edition, the author, however, categorically eschewed violence and stated that his sole aim was to focuss on the British as saviours of the country from anarchy and chaos, although one does not get this message till the end of the novel. Indeed, that message stood rather at cross-purpose. The plot of the story has been set against the Sanyās revolt (1770-90) in the British period yet the main tirade is directed against Muslim rule in India. This produced a sharp reaction in the Muslim intelligentsia.

Aurobindo Ghose and Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya²¹ further added a mystogogic vision to the concept of Hindu accendancy by blending nationalism with political violence. Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950)²² sought moral justification for political violence on the same ground of religious duty with which Krishna had inspired Arjuna to go to war against his own kith and kin. A first-class Tripos in classics from Cambridge, Aurobindo made his political debut as a columnist for a Bombay journal, the Indu Prakash, during his stay in Baroda (1893-1906) where he had taken up employment in the Gaikwad's state service after an unsuccessful attempt to enter the Indian Civil Service.²³ In

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18. It is interesting to note that Swādhin Bhārat (Independent India), a revolutionary leaflet (c.1916) quoted extensively from Anandamath. A few more leaflets seem to have been issued under the same title both before and after 1916. At least three different leaflets under the heading can be found at India Office Library, London.
 19. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), whose real name was Narendra Nath Dutt, was an English-educated disciple of the Bengali mystic, Ramkrishna (Paramahansa). He expounded the essentials of Vedanta harmonising them with western materialism.
 20. Speeches and Writings of Swami Vivekananda, 600.
 21. Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, real name Bhabani Charan Bandopadhyaya, (1861-1907) was Brahmin by birth. He later joined the Nababidhān order of the Brahmo School. He then turned a Christian, first a Protestant, then a Catholic, before he finally settled as a Vedantist. He was the founder-editor of the Sandhya (Twilight), a tersely anti-British Bengali evening newspaper, first published in December, 1904.
 22. For biographical sketh of Aurobindo Ghose see Karan Singh, Prophet of Indian Nationalism, 40-61.
 23. Aurobindo Stood fourth among the successful candidates in the ICS examination. He, however, defaulted the riding test, thus disqualifying himself for a job.

Baroda, he came into contact with Maharashtrian secret societies along with his younger brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose, who was staying with him at that time. He returned to Calcutta in 1906 at the height of the anti-partition agitation to take over as the Principal of the newly-founded National College (now Jadavpur University), having already despatched Barindra Ghose to organise a revolutionary cell in Calcutta. At Calcutta, behind the respectable and ostensibly harmless position of Principal, Aurobindo Ghose also assumed the leadership of the small conspiratorial group, the future Yugāntar party, already organised by Barindra Ghose in Calcutta. Simultaneously, he also became the editor of a daily nationalist English newspaper, Bandemataram, brought out in 1906 with the motto of 'India for Indians'. Aurobindo was arrested and unsuccessfully prosecuted in 1907 for seditious propaganda in it. Soon after his acquittal, Aurobindo Ghose fled to Pondicherry, then a French settlement in India, amidst thick rumour of his impending fresh incarceration. After that he never personally and directly came back in politics. At Pondicherry, where he established an ashrama in 1926, he led the life of a recluse engrossed in spiritualism and philosophical writings. He proved to be a prolific writer and his last work, The Life Divine was recommended for the Nobel in 1942.²⁴

It was, however, against the background of the growing political and economic discontent of the bhadrolok that the

24. George Seaver, Francis Young husband, Explorer and Mystic, 301.

terrorist cult flourished in Bengal.²⁵ The bhadrolok found themselves increasingly at odds with the bureaucracy in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries because of the incompatibility of their political ambition with the jealously-guarded paternalist monopoly of the bureaucracy.²⁶ This Indo-British tension reached its climax in the angry reaction of the Bengali Hindu elite against the partition of their province in 1905. Beginning with mild actions like petitions and protestations led by the moderate political leaders, the opposition to the partition gradually grew more intense and bitter, and turned into a violent agitation. Before long the moderates had lost the leadership of the agitation to the extremists.²⁷ The latter's radical political tactics like picketing of foreign-goods shops, bonfiring of foreign cloth and the promotion of country-made products, which formed the essence of Swadeshi,²⁸ lured many school boys and youths into Swadeshi volunteer corps. Meanwhile, various Samitis or clubs had grown up in Calcutta and elsewhere ostensibly as centres for the promotion of physical, cultural and community service activities, attracting into them many impressionable boys and youths.

Numerous secret societies had sprung up in and around Calcutta on the carbonari model²⁹ in the late nineteenth century mainly under the inspiration of Surendranath Banerjea who had

25. Broomfield, 33.

26. Ibid, 23-25.

27. Ibid, 30.

28. Literally pertaining to one's own country.

29. Bepin Chandra Pal, Memoirs of My Life and Times, 246-47.

popularised the Italian Risorgiments among the educated Bengalis by speeches and writings as a means of rousing in them strong nationalist sentiments.³⁰ Some of these societies meticulously observed impressive ritual formalities including signing of the membership-pledge by every member 'with his own blood drawn at the point of a sword from his breast',³¹ although actually they were shortlived amateurish societies, secret only in name, 'without any real revolutionary motive or any plan of secret political assassinations'.³² Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Prize winning poet of India, reminiscing about one such society, the Sanjibani Sabha, of which he himself was a member in his adolescence, drew a humorous sketch of its innocuity and superficialities in his Jiban Smrti.³³

Several new samitis, for instance, the Anushilan Samiti, the Dawn Society and the Atmannati Samiti in Calcutta; the Swadesh-Bandhab Samiti in Barisal; the Brati Samiti in Faridpur; the Surhid Samiti and the Sadhana Samiti in Mymensingh, had, however, sprung up at the beginning of this century with much stronger political and revolutionary fervour. A few of them soon turned into nurseries for budding terrorists, especially after they had been outlawed³⁴ at the height of the

30. S. N. Banerjea, A Nation in the Making, 43; Ram Chandra Palit (ed.) Speeches by Babu Surendra Nath Banerji. I.

31. Pal, 248.

32. Ibid, 248.

33. Rabindranath Tagore, Jiban-Smrti, 79-80.

34. The Dacca Anushilan Samiti, the Swadesh-Bandhab Samiti of Barisal, the Brati Samiti of Faridpur, the Surhid

anti-partition agitation, driving their members underground.

The most important of these samitis was the Anushilan Samiti,³⁵ which was formed in 1902 merely as a physical-culture and community-welfare club by some students of the General Assembly's Institute³⁶ (later the Scottish Churches College), Calcutta, of course with the backing and assistance of a few older people, whether or not connected with the Institute. One such person was Pramathanath Mitter,³⁷ a Barrister and member of the Calcutta High Court Bar with no apparent connection with the Institute itself. With his keen interest in physical-culture activities, already evidenced in his rather unsuccessful bid to build up an amateurish secret society in Calcutta in 1897,³⁸ Mitter became the chief of the Anushilan Samiti soon after its formation. The Samiti grew in stature as a welfare association under his guidance, the activity of its members, besides lāthi-play and body-building exercises being at first confined to voluntary social work, like helping the needy and the distressed at times of natural calamity, the collection and distribution of

Samiti and the Bāndhab Samiti of Mymensingh were outlawed in January, 1909, see Gazette of India, 9 January, 1909 and Calcutta Gazette, 13 January, 1909. The Calcutta Anushilan Samiti and the Atmannati Samiti in October, 1909. See Calcutta Gazette, 20 October, 1909.

35. So named after the concept of anushilan (i. e. practice of the ideal of Hindu revivalism and even use of force) preached by Barkim Chandra Chatterjee in Anandamath. See Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, Biplabi Jibaner Smriti (Memories of the Revolutionary life), 203; D.N.B. I, 128.
36. Mukherjee, 203.
37. Pramathanath Mitter (1853-1910), Kayasth, was the son of Bipradas Mitra, a civil Engineer. He became interested

alms to the poor, and cremating the dead at times of epidemic.³⁹

Some members of the Samiti, influenced by their reading of western revolutionary thought in their own study circle, broke off with Mitter who had strenuously tried to steer the Samiti clear of terrorism.⁴⁰

The transformation of the Anushilan Samiti from a mere physical and moral culture club to a tightly-controlled and strictly-regimented conspiratorial body began with the arrival in Calcutta from Baroda in 1902 of Barindra Kumar Ghose⁴¹ and

in European secret societies while he was studying Law in London in the 1870's. See D.N.B., III, 127-29.

38. Ibid.

39. Mukherjee, 204-5.

40. Gopal Halder, 'Revolutionary Terrorism' in Atulchandra Gupta (ed.) Studies in the Bengal Renaissance, 238; Bhupendranath Dutt, 28-31.

41. Barindra Kumar Ghose (1880-1959), Aurobindo Ghose's younger brother, had little formal education and read up to First Arts. His father having died in his childhood, he had to face great financial hardship, at times staying with his other brothers. After Aurobindo Ghose's return to India from England, Barindra joined him in Baroda. He pioneered the terrorist campaign in Bengal, and was transported to the Andamans as one of the principal accused in the Alipore Bomb Case, 1909. Released on a Royal pardon in 1919, he forsook politics and for some time stayed at Aurobindo's Ashrama in Pandicherry. He then became a journalist and edited Basumati, a Bengali daily in the 1930's. See D.N.B., II, 38-40.

Jatindranath Banerji,⁴² two emissaries of Aurobindo Ghose, with the object of organising a clandestine revolutionary party on the Maharashtrian lines.⁴³ The two emissaries, with the same middle class and high-caste background as other bhadra youths, had no difficulty in entering into a working relationship with the leaders of the Samiti. Details of the agreement are scarce. It is, however, clear that the emissaries got the better part of it and gradually wielded such influence in the Samiti as to get Aurobindo Ghose on its executive committee as one of its Vice-Presidents.⁴⁴ This was followed by some internal differentiation within the Samiti. New recruits now formed an outer circle engaged in physical and moral culture activity at the Samiti premises in Madan Mitra's lane. Senior members, classified into various grades according to their degree of attainment, and attachment to the Samiti, met at

42. Jatindranath Banerji (1877-1930), son of a Peshkar (head-clerk) and inattentive in studies, read upto F.A. He joined the Gaikwad's army in 1900 under an assumed name and turned a revolutionary peer of Aurobindo Ghose. He left the Anushilan Party in or about 1904 after a quarrel with Barindra and turned asectic under the title of Swami Nirrlamba, though still retaining a loose connection with individual terrorist, D.N.B., I, 114-16

43. Dutt, 54; Mukherjee, 197.

44. The committee consisted of P. Mitter (Director or President); Chitta Ranjan Das, who later was a contender for the national leadership of the Congress Party, and Aurobindo Ghose (Vice-President); Satish Bose, one of the founders of the Samiti, (Secretary). After the formation of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti, its chief, Pulin Das and Satish Bose acted as secretary alternately. C.R. Das, however, disassociated himself from the Samiti in 1907 soon after it first engaged in violence.

108 A Upper Circular Road, Calcutta where Jatindranath Banerji had started a new club and organised a study group to acquaint its members with European revolutionary thought and action.⁴⁵

The history of the Irish Home Rule movement, the Italian Risorgimento and the lives and exploits of Mazzini and Garibaldi, the American war of Independence, the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 in India formed the core of the reading list of the Study group,⁴⁶ besides the study of the Gita,⁴⁷ which formed the philosophical and the moral fountainhead of the terrorist movement in Bengal.

Recruitment from now on became highly selective, and all recruits had to undergo a strenuous period of apprenticeship and conform to an idealistic code of conduct, including celibacy, before they were finally initiated as full members with the performance of elaborate Hindu religious rites. The swearing of vows, for which the Samiti had a set form of pledges in Sanskrit,⁴⁸ was a sine qua non for the members.⁴⁹ Much of these rigidities in recruitment procedures and most of the religious trappings fell into disuse in the 1920's and 1930's.⁵⁰

45. Mukherjee, 198, 271-72.

46. R. C. I. R. C., 18-19.

47. Ibid, 18; Haldar, 234.

48. Dutt, 54.

49. Ibid, 54.

50. 'A Note by the Secretary of State for India (30th November, 1933) on Terrorism in India' in J. C. E. II. 337.

The Dacca branch of the Samiti, opened in 1905, proved to be the most rigidly-disciplined and highly centralised terrorist organization of all, with widespread ramifications⁵¹ in eastern and northern Bengal under the dictatorship of Pulin Behari Das (1877-1949).⁵² Das, who came of a Kayasth family in Faridpur district, was the son of a lawyer practising in Madaripur, a Subdivisional town in Faridpur district. Das seems to have been somewhat of a rebel-child and not to have got on well with his father. He had his early education in Barisal, away from home and the family. He passed his F.A. Examination on the second attempt in 1898 from Cooch Behar, and he took the B.A. examination twice unsuccessfully. His father's death in 1898 was followed by a split in the joint family, his uncle having opted for an independent establishment for himself. Pulin Das thus found himself beset with great financial difficulties. He somehow maintained a family of four, consisting of his mother, a younger brother and a sister, besides himself, from the meagre income from private tuition and from the remuneration for copying manuscripts for publishers till he found the job of a Laboratory Assistant at Dacca. Thus frustrated by unfulfilled educational and occupational aspirations, an unhappy family background and serious financial problems, Das found refuge in the secret society probably seeking compensation for the above deficiencies.

51. Dacca Anushilan Samiti had more than 500 branches. See Sedition Committee, 18.

52. For biographical sketch, see D.N.B.I., 356-57.

Now, to revert again to the history of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti, Barindra Ghose had gathered round him a group of members of the Samiti,⁵³ and early in 1906 started to produce seditious propaganda, against the counsel of P. Mitter. This rebel group also started in March, 1906 a Bengali weekly the Yugantar (New Era) in which they openly preached hatred against the government, and described ways and means of collecting arms and manufacturing bombs.⁵⁴ They also had a few persons trained abroad in the handling of explosives, a few of whom did actually make a few bombs on their return. This small group, acting independently of the parent body, formed the core of what later came to be known as the Yugantar party, a term initially used by the police to identify these members of the Samiti who had rallied round their mouthpiece, the Yugantar, as distinct from others. This term secured wide currency in 1910 when in the Howrah Conspiracy Case, the accused were presented before the court as having belonged to about a dozen groups of which the Yugantar group was referred to as the most dangerous one.⁵⁵ The appellation was not, however, assumed by the terrorists themselves till after 1915 when it came to denote a confederacy⁵⁶ of terrorist groups principally based in various places of western Bengal. Meanwhile the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti, which had been placed under ban since 1907, had

53. R. C. I. R. C., 17; Mukherjee, 26, 47, 249, 283 passim.

54. R. C. I. R. C., 17.

55. Mukherjee, 45.

56. Mukherjee, 45, 642.

practically disappeared; and the Dacca Anushilan Samiti and the Yugāntar party presented themselves as the two most dangerous groups operating in eastern and western Bengal respectively, although, in practice, their activities were not confined to strictly-defined geographical regions.

For their organizational framework and operational techniques, the Bengali terrorists looked outwards, particularly to the model of the Italian carbonari⁵⁷ societies and to a lesser degree to that of Russian nihilism and the narodniki⁵⁸ movement of the nineteenth century. In the same way they looked outside India for more general encouragement in their struggle with western imperialism. In particular British discomfiture at the hands of the Boers, 1899-1902 and Russia's defeat by Japan, 1904-05 had largely dispelled the myth of western superiority and military invincibility from the Indian mind—Swami Vivekananda forcefully stimulating the process with his exhortations. The Bengali reaction to these events, however, lacked perspective. For instance, terrorists and nationalists alike over-looked the fact that Japan's successful industrialisation had been an important factor behind her self-reliance and military victory. Instead, impressed merely by the Japanese victory, the Bengali terrorists impulsively argued: if Japan,

57. Nineteenth-century Italian secret societies advocating liberalism, constitutionalism and republicanism.

58. Narodnik (populist) was a 19th century socialist movement of Russian raznochintsy (intellectual from non-gentry classes) preaching rebellion amongst the masses. Constantly persecuted by the police, the narodniki disintegrated after the assassination of the Emperor. Alexander II in 1881 and turned into Marxists.

entering the sphere of western domination after India, could thwart a big European power, why not India?

So urged by idealism tinged more with fantasy than realism, the Barindra-faction, the Dacca Anushilan Samiti and few other less formal terrorist groups, acting independently of each other, embarked upon a campaign of dacoity and murder. Such action, as its proponents claimed,⁵⁹ was geared to the need of securing funds and the sinews of war and at the same time accustoming the Bengali youth to violent action in preparation for an armed uprising, the ultimate terrorist objective, partly realised in a raid on government armouries in Chittagong in 1930. But dacoity and murder were not without some degrading effects on the terrorist campaign. Much of the proceeds of dacoity, according to the admission of some terrorists⁶⁰ themselves, were wasted in defraying legal defence costs and through misappropriation by persons entrusted with their safe-keeping. Some committed decoities even only to fill their own pockets. The Bengali bhadraṅg were, however, characteristically averse to acts of dacoity and murder which attracted a social stigma, and it took some time for them to overcome their initial irresolution and inhibition about such action.⁶¹

59. Guha, 84, 87, 88. Government too made much the same analysis. See Government of Bengal Political Department, MMPCI, 1924-25 Resolution No. 10850-P- 25 Oct. 1924.

60. Dutt, 24. Guha, 84.

61. R. C. I. R. C., 21.

But once the inhibition had gone, the terrorist campaign assumed menacing proportions. Between 1907 and 1919, the years forming the opening phase of terrorism in Bengal, no less than 210 terrorist outrages occurred, with a death toll of seventy on the police and public side⁶² and of about twenty-four on the terrorist side.⁶³ The situation was, however, retrieved by strong government countermeasures like widespread arrests and detention, a curb upon civil liberties and numerous successful prosecutions. No fewer than 205 persons were convicted⁶⁴ during this period under various provisions of the Indian Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes as also under the Indian Arms Act, 1878 and the Explosive Substances Act, 1908. A number of convicted persons were transported to the Andamans, a penal settlement in this group of islands off the Bay of Bengal. The most effective countermeasure was, however, detention under the Defence of India Act, 1915 under which 1,262 persons⁶⁵ were dealt with in Bengal between May 1915 and November 1919, besides one hundred and twenty persons⁶⁶ held under the State Prisoners Regulation III of 1818. As a result of these measures, the terrorist situation was brought under complete control in 1919.

62. B.P.R., 1931, 29; J.C.E. II, 324; R.C.I.R.C., 182.

63. Calculated from R.C.I.R.C. 182.

64. J.C.E., II, 324.

65. Ibid, 325; B.P.R. 1931, 27.

66. B.P.R., 1931, 27; Government of India. Terrorism in India, 1917-1936, II.

Compared to an average of seventeen⁶⁷ terrorist outrages a year between 1907 and 1918, only one⁶⁸ such crime occurred in 1919, and none at all in 1920 and 1921.⁶⁹ The government felt sufficiently secured to release all detenus by February, 1920 under a royal pardon granted in 1919.⁷⁰ The pardon was gradually extended even to those convicted on specific charges of sedition, including those transported to the Andamans.⁷¹

The terrorist leaders, who were then free to move openly in the country, almost immediately threw themselves into the task of reorganising⁷² their respective groups by bringing their old followers together and refilling their depleted ranks with new recruits, at the same time guarding against any premature outbreak of violence. Gandhi's Non-Cooperation movement and the cognate volunteer movement of 1921-22 had, meanwhile, presented the terrorist leaders with a situation uniquely suited to their strategy. The Yugantar leaders promptly seized the opportunity to infiltrate into the Bengal Congress at its various levels and to use it as a stalking horse⁷³ in rebuilding their own revolutionary party. The penetration into the Bengal Congress was so rapid and deep that by early 1922 several Yugantar leaders .

67. Calculated from BPR, 1931, 29.

68. Ibid, 29.

69. Ibid, 29.

70. Ibid, 27; JCE, II, 325.

71. JCE, II, 325.

72. JCE, II, 326; BPR, 1931, 27; VR (Viceroy) to S (Secretary) of S (State) for India. Telegram JRL/FHM/1A, 8 September, 1923, P&J File No. 4259 of 1924, L/P&J/6/1893; G. of I,

had moved into the sixty-member Bengal Provincial Congress Committee; three of them found their way into the Executive Council of the Provincial Congress Committee,⁷⁴ two of them holding the all important offices of Secretary and Assistant Secretary.⁷⁵ The extent of the control these revolutionaries had come to exercise over the Bengal Congress was evident from the fact that by the end of the year at least four known terrorists were amongst those representing Bengal on the All India Congress Committee.⁷⁶ The Anushilan leaders were, however, very sceptical about the efficacy of constitutional agitation and were generally not committed⁷⁷ to the Non-Cooperation movement. A group of them even openly opposed it under Pulin Das' leadership resulting in the loss of his hold on the Anushilan party.⁷⁸ Other Anushilanites cultivated good relations with the Congress leaders without actually joining the

Home Department to Under S. of S. Secret D. O. letter No.101, 12 June 1924, ibid.

73. JCE, II, 326 Report of two Session Judges of Bengal on the detention of twenty-two prisoners detained under Regulation III of 1818, 5, 8-9. Register No.2674 of 1924, P&J File No.2674 of 1924, L/P&J/6/1893.
74. Ibid, 7.
75. Bhupati Mazumdar and Monoranjan Gupta respectively.
76. Amarendranath Chatterjee, Upendranath Banerji, Bepin Behari Ganguli and Satyendra Chandra Mitra.
77. Report of two Sessions Judges, 5. P&J File No.2674 of 1924 in L/P&J/6/1893.
78. Ibid, 5; Muzaffar Ahmed, Myself and the Communist Party of India, 1920-1929, 425-26.

Congress party while carrying on the reorganization of their own conspiratorial party.

The Bengal Congress' policy in this regard, too, seemed to have been one of expediency—of maintaining contact with the terrorist leaders as a means of preventing any premature outbreak of violence at least during its experiment with a constitutional and non-violent mass movement⁷⁹ at the same time utilising the services of the already politically articulated terrorists for the promotion of the Non Cooperation movement. This Congress-terrorist rapport became even closer under the sweeping ascendancy of the Swarajist party in Bengal in 1923. This party with its policy of council entry as opposed to the Gandhian policy of boycott of the council had captured the Congress party apparatus in Bengal under Chitta Ranjan Das' leadership. In this the Swarajists had been greatly assisted⁷⁹ by the Bengali terrorist leaders who had meanwhile struck a bargain with the Swarajists securing for themselves the protection of the Swarajya party so long as they refrained from violence. This, besides giving the terrorists a breathing space, also provided them with the advantage of the use of the Congress platform for their own ends as they did in 1924 by successfully putting through a resolution⁸⁰ at the annual conference of the Bengal Congress at Sirajganj in praise of one Gopi Mohan Saha, who was earlier

79. Mukherjee, 464, 479.

80. JCE, II, 326.

executed for the murder of an English merchant, Ernest Day, in mistake for Charles (later Sir Charles) Tegart, the Commissioner of the Calcutta Police. The resolution was, however, rescinded afterwards under pressure from Gandhi.

Meanwhile, the younger hot heads amongst the Calcutta and the Chittagong Yugantarites had resumed⁸¹ violence, in defiance of their senior leaders' policy of caution, under the leadership of Santosh Kumar Mitra⁸² and Surrya Kumar Sen⁸³ respectively. A few senior Yugantarites in Calcutta like

81. Note prepared by R. E. A. Ray, Special Superintendent of Police, Intelligence Branch, CID on the insufficiency of the powers conferred by the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1930 to deal with terrorism in Bengal. G. of I. Home Department File No. 4142/32-Pol., G. of I. C. P. Procs., Vol. 81, Year 1932.
82. Santosh Kumar Mitra (1901-1931), Kayasth by caste, was recruited into the Yugantar party by Bepin Ganguli during the Non-Cooperation movement when he was a post-graduate student in Calcutta. He was killed at the Hijli Detention Camp in 1932 as the camp guards opened fire following disturbances in the jail. DNB, III, 134.
83. Surrya Kumar Sen (1894-1931), Baidya by caste, formed a Yugantar cell in Chittagong during the Non-Cooperation movement under the cover of Shānti Āshram, ostensibly a gymnasium. At that time he was a teacher at a local High School. He graduated in 1918, having earlier been expelled for adopting unfair means in examination. He led a raid on government armouries in Chittagong in 1930, and was later executed for the crime in 1934 after a protracted trial. DNB, IV, 122-24.

Jyotish Chandra Ghose⁸⁴ and Bepin Behari Ganguli,⁸⁵ fearing that the strict restraint exercised by them on the younger members could cost them their leadership, however, approved resumption of violence on a limited scale⁸⁶ without reference to other leaders. The local government, however, on advance warning from their intelligence sources of an impending threat of a renewed campaign of violence had armed themselves with extensive powers of arrest and detention under an Ordinance⁸⁷ promulgated by the central government in October, 1924. They acted promptly detaining 187 persons, including two Members of the Bengal Legislative Council, Satyendra Chandra Mitra and Anil Baran Roy, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation, Subhas Chandra Bose, under the Ordinance,⁸⁸

84. Jyotish Chandra Ghose (1887-1970), Kayasth by caste, joined the terrorist movement during the anti-partition agitation when he was a student. An M.A. in English and History, he taught English at Hooghly College till he joined Ripon College. He was, however, forced to leave the latter under pressure from the government for his terrorist connection. In the early 1920's he led a small Yugāntar cell. Later, he joined the Congress party on the ticket of which he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly under the Government of India Act, 1935. After independence he was elected to the State Assembly. DNB. II, 47-48.
85. Bepin Behari Ganguli (1887-1954), Brahmin by caste, joined the Atmannati Samiti in 1904 simultaneously holding the membership of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti. In the early 1920's he joined the Congress party. In 1951 he was elected to the West Bengal Assembly on a Congress ticket. DNB II, 22-23.
86. Chief Secretary, G. of B. to Secretary, Home Department, G. of I. confidential letter No. 1051 P.S.D. 8 September, 1931. Home Department File No. 4147/32, G. of I., C.P. Procs. Vol. 81, year 1932; ^JMukherjee, 497.
87. Lord Lytton, Pundits and Elephants, 66; G. of B. Resolution No. 10850 P, 25 October, 1924, MMPCI, 1924-25.

and about twenty others under the Bengal Prisoners' Regulation III of 1818.⁸⁹ The government, thus acting rather pre-emptively, had maintained such^a firm grip on the situation that terrorist hostilities quickly subsided. By the end of 1927, the government even felt secure enough to start releasing detenus all of whom had been set free by February, 1929.⁹⁰

On their release the leaders of both the Anushilan and the Yugāntar, the two main terrorist parties, proceeded to pool⁹¹ their resources for a joint action of armed insurrection according to a scheme agreed upon by some of the leading members on both sides during their incarceration together at Midnapur Jail⁹² from 1923 to 1925. Prominent among the terrorists

88. Chief Secretary, G. of B. to Secretary, Home Department G. of I. confidential letter No.1051 PSD, 8 September 1931. Home Department File No.4147/32, G. of I. C. P. Procs., Vol.81, Year 1932; Terrorism in India, 20.
89. BLCP, 1925, XVIII, 110; Ibid, 1925, XIX, 372-73.
90. BPR, 1931, 27-28; Sir Stanely Jackson (Governor of Bengal, 1927-1932) to Lord Birkenhead (S of S), 26 September, 1928, Birkenhead Collection, MSS. Eur. D. 703, 22.
91. R. E. A. Ray, Home Department File No.4142/32-Pol., G. of I, C. P. Procs., Vol.81, Year 1932; Percival Griffiths, To Guard My People, 261-62; Sir Stanely Jackson to Birkenhead, Birkenhead Collection, MSS. Eur D.703, 22.
92. W. D. R. Prentice (Acting Chief Secretary, G. of B) to Secretary, Home Department, G. of I. Letter No.219 P. S., 16 January, 1930, G. of I., P. Procs., Vol. 12046, year 1934; Mukherjee, 490, 492-93.

reaching this agreement were Jadu Gopal Mukherjee⁹³ and Naresh Chaudhuri from the Yugantar side, and Pratul Ganguli⁹⁴ and Troilokya Nath Chakravarti⁹⁵ from the Anushilan side.⁹⁶ They actually formed an amalgamated revolutionary party, an all Bengal Revolutionary Party, under the joint leadership of Narendra Mohan Sen⁹⁷ and Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, of the Anushilan and the Yugantar parties respectively with the object of working 'for the complete independence of India,

93. Jadu Gopal Mukherjee (1886-), Brahmin by caste, was the son of a lawyer of Tamluk in Midnapur district and came of a land-owning family. He joined the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti in 1905 and later passed the MBBS examination. He was an active partner in the Indo-German conspiracy to land arms in Bengal for the terrorists. In the early 1920's he joined the Congress party. He went into a semi-retirement from revolutionary activity in 1929 after a projected amalgamation scheme of the Yugantar and the Anushilan parties had fallen through. He severed connection with the Congress party in 1947 on the question of partition of India and since then left politics. DNB, III, 159-60.
94. Pratul Chandra Ganguli (1894-1957), Brahmin by caste, was the son of a lawyer of Narayanganj in Dacca district. He joined the Anushilan Samiti during the anti-partition agitation under the influence of one of his cousins, at that time his mentor and guide. He was sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment in the Barisal conspiracy case. He still maintained his revolutionary connection after his release in 1922 when he also joined the Congress party. Between 1928 and 1930 when he was again detained by the government, he served as President, Dacca District Congress Committee; member of the B.P.C.C. and the A.I.C.C. In 1929, he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council and in 1939 to the Bengal Legislative Assembly. He retired from politics in 1947. DNB, II, 27-28.
95. Troilokya Nath Chakravarty (1889-1970), Brahmin by caste, came from Bajitpur in Mymensingh and joined the Dacca Anushilan in 1906 when he was a school-student in Dacca. He was incarcerated several times for his revolutionary activity. In 1928, he joined the Hindustan Republican Association, although still retaining his connection with and position in the Anushilan Party. In 1938, he joined the

through open associations at first, while developing their secret organizations, and ultimately through acts of open rebellion.⁹⁸ Accordingly they organised an all Bengal Volunteer Corps on the model of the Irish Volunteers,⁹⁹ who donned fictitious military uniform and put on a military-style parade at the All-India Congress session at Calcutta in 1928 under the command of Subhas Chandra Bose, who had styled himself as G. O. C. much to Gandhi's chagrin. The Anushilan-Yugantar merger, however, did not survive the endemic jealousies of the leaders and their suspicion of one another.¹⁰⁰ The leadership contest for the provincial Congress between Subhas Bose and J. M. Sen Gupta and the consequent infighting between their supporters

Forward Bloc. He was elected to the East Pakistan Legislative in 1954 on the ticket of the United Progressive Party. DNB, I, 255.

96. J. Mukherjee, 493.

97. Narendra Mohan Sen (1887-1961), Baidya by caste, was a leading member of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti and its virtual dictator from 1910. He later turned a Sanyasi (ascetic) under the title of Ramkrishna Brahmachari, DNB, IV, 111-12.

98. W. D. R. Prentice, Secretary, G. of I. Home Department. Letter No. 219 P.S. 16 January 1930, G of I, P. Procs., Vol. 12046, Year 1934.

99. Ibid.

100. Officiating Chief Secretary, G of B to Secretary, G of I Home Department. Secret letter No. D. 3187, 21 August, 1929. Register No. 3999 of 1929, P&J File No. 578 of 1929, L/P&J/6/1976; Sir Stanely Jackson to Lord Birkenhead, Birkenhead Papers, 22.

further widened the rift¹⁰¹ between the Yugantar and the Anushilan parties till the two finally parted ways in 1929.

The Anushilan-Yugantar merger also failed to inspire confidence in the young hot heads among the terrorists who not only rejected out of hand the amalgamated party's strategy of a temporary suspension of violence but also secretly drew up a counter-programme of renewed violence.¹⁰² Ironically, this programme was worked out almost at the same time as the senior leaders were thrashing out their own amalgamation scheme in the same Midnapur jail¹⁰³ where they all were detained together. The initiative for a unified programme of renewed violence was taken by Niranjan Sen Gupta¹⁰⁴ of the Barisal Anushilan, Satish Chandra Pakrashi¹⁰⁵ of the Dacca

101. J. Mukherjee, 536, 600; Purnendu Dastidar, Swadhinata Sangrame Chattagram (Chittagong and the War of Independence), 86.

102. Satish Pakrashi, Agniyuger Katha (Tales of the fiery Era), 154.

103. Ibid, 154.

104. Niranjan Sen Gupta commenced his political life like many of his class and generation as a terrorist and became the leader of the Barisal branch of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti. He later led a group of young dissidents called the New Violence Party. He then moved from political violence to marxism during the 1930's when in detention in the Andamans. He rose in the ranks of the Communist Party of India, and when it split in 1964, he joined the left wing, known as the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). He was a member of the CPIM-led coalition Ministry, 1967-71 in West Bengal, and died in office in 1971. Satish Pakrashi, 153-54, 164.

105. Satish Chandra Pakrashi (1893-1973), Brahmin, was the son of a postal clerk. His grandfather, Ananda Chakravarty (Pakrashi), a Dacca-lawyer, was a patron

Anushilan, Jatin Das¹⁰⁶ of the South Calcutta Anushilan, and Suryya Sen and Ganesh Ghose¹⁰⁷ of the Chittagong Yugāntar party. On their release, they busily engaged themselves in forming a confederacy, labelled variously as the New Violence Party or the Advance/Revolt group, with a programme of simultaneous attacks on district armouries and treasuries, coupled with a massacre¹⁰⁸ of executive officers and Europeans. Mymensingh, Barisal and Chittagong were marked out by them as targets for immediate attack.¹⁰⁹ Isolated terrorist actions

of the Anushilan Party which Satish Pakrashi joined in 1908 while still at school. He soon rose in position in the party hierarchy. He turned Marxist during his detention in the Andamans in the 1930's and later joined the CPI-M, DNB, III, 283.

106. Jatindra Nath Das (1904-1929), Kayasth, joined the Anushilan Party during the Non-Cooperation movement when he was a student in a Calcutta College. In 1925, he was simultaneously made the Secretary of the South Calcutta Congress and a member of the BPCC. He had also associated himself with the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association and thus became a link between the Bengali and Northern Indian terrorists. He was an accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, 1929 and died in the Lahore jail after a sixty-three days' hunger strike in protest against ill treatment of detained and under trial prisoners in that jail. DNB, I, 348-49.
107. Ganesh Ghose (1900-), Kayasth, joined the Chittagong Yugāntar party in the early 1920's. His father was a railway employee in Chittagong. He was sentenced to transportation for life for his part in the Chittagong armoury raid and was subsequently transferred to the Andamans where he turned a Marxist. On his release, he joined the CPI in 1946 and later the CPI-M of which he is now an active member. He was returned to the West Bengal State Assembly several times and once to the Lok Sabha, on the Communist Party ticket. DNB, II, 40-42.
108. Chief Secretary, G of B to Secretary, Home Department, G of I. Letter No. 219 P.S., 16 January, 1930. G of I. P. Procs. Vol. 12046, Year 1934.
109. Ibid; Pakrashi, 186.

were thus resumed in 1928,¹¹⁰ while starting with the murder of a Sub-Inspector of Police in Barisal in March, 1929, four incidents of terrorist outrages occurred in the province during the year.¹¹¹ This resumption of violence naturally led to stricter police vigilance over known terrorists, particularly after the appearance in November, 1929 of an anonymous 'red leaflet'¹¹² announcing the inauguration of a renewed campaign of violence. In December, 1929, the police raided Niranjan Sen Gupta's residence on Mechuabazar street, Calcutta, arresting Sen Gupta, Satish Pakrashi and two others.¹¹³ The police also seized two highly seditious documents¹¹⁴ a manuscript copy of a leaflet preaching violence and hatred against the government, and a 'District Organization Scheme' divided under such topics as explosives, finance, volunteer organization, espionage, communications, resources and so on, presumably underlining the terrorist preparation for the projected district uprisings. This document, which also

110. BPR, 1931, 27, 29. Three minor crimes were committed in 1928.

111. Terrorism in India, 25-26; BPR, 1931, 28-29.

112. Pakrashi, 188.

113. Chief Secretary, Gof B to Secretary, Home Department, G of I Letter No. 219 P.S. of 16 January, 1930. Vol. 12046, Year 1934.

114. Ibid.

contained a list of forty-three names labelled 'group for present action,'¹¹⁵ provided valuable leads for further searches by the police and more arrests, which rose to a total of thirty-two. Twenty-seven of the arrested were proceeded against in what was called the Mechuabazar Street Bomb Conspiracy Case¹¹⁶ which ended early in 1930 in the conviction of seventeen¹¹⁷ accused, including Sen Gupta and Pakrashi, who were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The New Violence Party thus disintegrated before it could settle down to a regular course of violence.

This, however, did not mark the end of the terrorist movement in Bengal. Far from it, the movement was revived again in 1930 in a much fiercer form than ever before. Meanwhile political tension and excitement had begun building up in Bengal and elsewhere in India following the re-opening of the complex question of a fresh constitutional advance in India, marked by the appointment late in 1927 of a Statutory Commission.¹¹⁸ The exclusion of Indians from this body inevitably led Congress to

115. Chief Secretary, Gof B, to Secretary, Home Department, G of I. Letter No. 219 P.S. of 16 January, 1930, G of I P. Procs., Vol. 12046, Year 1934.

116. Statesman, 15 February, 1930.

117. Ibid.

118. Generally known as Simon Commission after the name of its Chairman, Sir John Simon.

boycott it and organise a nation-wide agitation against it, although with little visible success. The situation, however, took a turn for the worse following a shift in 1929 in the Congress' goal from Dominion Status to Purna Swaraj or complete independence, backed by a programme of Civil Disobedience which was inaugurated by Gandhi early in 1930 by making contraband salt from sea-water near Ahmadabad. The organised defiance of the law and authority in different forms that followed in its wake, produced a situation¹¹⁹ most favourable to recruitment to the terrorist ranks and to a resumption of violence, which the terrorists exploited to the full. To add to the deteriorating political situation, India was also now suffering from the economic strains of the world-wide economic depression of the 1930's.¹²⁰ In Bengal, a sharp fall in the prices of agricultural commodities had resulted in a shortage of cash in the country-side, particularly in the jute and rice growing districts of eastern and northern Bengal—¹²¹ the areas also worst-hit by terrorism since the beginning of the century. This had, in turn, resulted in a low recovery of land-rent, which hit the clerkly and professional urban

119. Chief Secretary G of B to Secretary, Pol. Department, G of I. Secret Letter No.1051-P.S.D., 8 September, 1931. Home Department File No.4147/32-Poll. G of I, C.P.Procs, Vol. 81, Year 1932.

120. Ibid; Census of India, 1931, V, I, 11.

121. Chief Secretary, G of B to Secretary, Pol. Department, G of I Secret letter No.1051-P.S.D., 8 September, 1931. Home Department File No.4147/32-Poll. G of I, C.P. Procs., Vol. 81, Year 1932.

bhadralok hard, since many of them relied on the return from land for the educational expenses of their children and other prestigious expenditure. The financial hardship so faced by the bhadralok was obvious from the fact that in the Chittagong Division alone the number of estates falling into arrears in the payment of government revenue rose from 5,399 in 1922 to 13,245 in 1932;¹²² nine hundred and twenty-two¹²³ defaulting estates were actually sold in 1932, compared to four hundred and eighty-five¹²⁴ in 1922. The same pattern recurred elsewhere in the province. This becomes evident from the statistical table for all Bengal given below—¹²⁵ the statistics which are compiled from the Report on the Administration of Bengal for the years mentioned. The economic strain upon the

122. MLCP, 1934, XLIV. I., 288, See O. M. Martin's (Secretary, Bengal Government, Revenue Department) reply to a question in the house by Haji Badi Ahmed Choudhury, MLC, Chittagong South, Muhammadan.

123. BLCP., 1934, XLIV. I., 288.

124. Ibid.

| 125. Year | No. of default- ing estates | Amount default- ed (Rs.) | No. of estates sold |
|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1927-28 | 11,568 | 1,918,770 | 1,001 |
| 1928-29 | 17,182 | 2,279,310 | 1,115 |
| 1929-30 | 14,205 | 3,197,694 | 1,342 |
| 1930-31 | 16,122 | 6,006,691 | 1,422 |
| 1931-32 | 19,920 | 8,748,572 | 1,177 |
| 1932-33 | 26,055 | 11,698,667 | 1,344 |
| 1933-34 | 31,169 | 12,993,901 | 1,826 |
| 1934-35 | 30,646 | 12,389,322 | 1,930 |
| 1935-36 | 25,262 | 11,351,032 | 1,577 |

bhadra^{was}lok also reflected in the decline of enrolment in schools and colleges in 1931.¹²⁶ This was coupled with a shrinkage since the 1920's of the white-collar employment market which had been increasingly overcrowded in any case since the beginning of this century. The employment prospect of bhadralok youths became all the more constricted following drastic post-war economies enforced in the 1920's in commercial firms, the other traditional sources of white-collar jobs. They were, therefore, easily carried away by the political excitement created by the Civil Disobedience, many of them, in turn, having fallen under the influence of terrorist-recruiters.

So, there was a resurgence of violence in 1930—the year also witnessing the most sensational of all terrorist outrages in Bengal, the raid on government armouries in Chittagong on the Good Friday eve of 19 April, by a group of local Yugantarites under the command of Suryya Sen. Pre-planned in minute detail, starting from the preparation of mobilization lists down to the synchronization of watches, the raid was carried out with perfect precision,¹²⁷ the action having started only about an hour behind schedule.¹²⁸ Sixty-three¹²⁹ terrorists all clad in khaki and the leaders wearing

126. The school-student population maintained a steady increase till 1930 when the number rose to 285,479 from 241,439 in 1926. But the number dropped to 277,582 in 1931. See Sixth QRPEB, 127 and Eighth QRPEB, 142.

127. Terrorism in India, 28.

128. Ibid, 28; In fact the terrorist action was brought forward by a day to forestall a police action planned against them. for 19 April, 1930, which had been found out by the terrorist intelligence. See Percival Griffiths, 263.

army officers' uniform¹³⁰ went into action in the name of the Indian Republican Army.¹³¹ Thus, in style, as a few Indian authors afterwards noted, the raid resembled the Irish Easter Rising of 1916. There is, however, nothing to suggest a direct and regular Irish link with this event or with any other terrorist action at any time in Bengal, although the Bengali terrorists had, doubtless, drawn heavily on the inspiration of the Sinn Fein movement.

Taking the local administration by surprise, and operating at first in small groups, the raiders played havoc¹³² in the town for about two hours between ten and twelve midnight during which period they had destroyed the telephone exchange and the telegraph office and had further disrupted communication by removing rails and cutting telephone and telegraph wires at two places¹³³ along the railway track between Chittagong and

129. For a complete list of the raiders, see Dastidar, 146-52.

130. BPR, 1930, 30.

131. Presumably, a version of the Hindustan Republican Association or Army started in 1924 with upper India as its main centre of activity.

132. BPR, 1930, 30-31. J.C.E. II, 330-31; G of B to S of S. Telegram No.1903 P.S., 20 April, 1930, Register 1867 of 1930, P&J File No.1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000; V2 to S of S Telegram Nos.1165-S, 19 April, 1930 and S.445. Political, 20 April, 1930. Register 1835 and 1868 of 1930, P&J File No.1483, L/P&J/6/2000.

133. At Dhum and Laksham, forty and seventy miles respectively from Chittagong.

Feni, thus completely isolating Chittagong from the rest of the province. Then they simultaneously stormed the Auxiliary Forces' and Police armouries¹³⁴ in two groups, and after seizing what arms and ammunitions they could,¹³⁵ they set the two armouries on fire causing extensive damage to both.¹³⁶ Eight people including Sgt. Major A. Farrell, Officer-in-Charge of the Auxiliary Forces armoury, and a sentry at each armoury were killed¹³⁷ by the terrorists during their rampage, they themselves having suffered only one casualty, serious burn-injuries suffered by one of them while setting the police armoury on fire. He was subsequently captured, and he died in hospital. Meanwhile, a small government force, led by the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, F.C. Farmer, with a Lewis gun hurriedly secured from a subsidiary armoury,¹³⁸ mounted a counter attack on the raiders assembled at the Police armoury, compelling them to withdraw to the nearby hills. This foiled

134. About a mile apart from each other.

135. Fifty-five muskets, twenty-two revolvers, one rifle and an unknown quantity of ammunition were taken from the Police armoury. G of B to S of S. Telegram No.1903 P.S., 20 April, 1930; V&to S of S. Telegram No.S.445 Political, 20 April, 1930, P&J File No.1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000.

136. G, of B, to S of S. Telegram No.1903 P.S., 20 April, 1930, P&J File No.1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000.

137. BPR, 1930, 30.

138. Ibid.

the further terrorist plans for robbing the government treasury and massacring Europeans in the town.¹³⁹

The news of the raid and a request for reinforcements was radioed to Calcutta next morning by the District Magistrate from a ship in the harbour.¹⁴⁰ The government forces, quickly reinforced by a hundred-man strong detachment of the Eastern Frontier Rifles, a force classified as Military Police and Levies under the Police rather than the Army,¹⁴¹ and a small contingent of the Surma Valley Light Horse,¹⁴² an auxiliary cavalry regiment of the Assam tea-planters, pursued the fleeing raiders and engaged them in the evening of 22 April, 1930, four days after the raid, in the hills about six miles north of Chittagong town. In the brief encounter that followed, eleven terrorists had fallen¹⁴³ when the others took to their heels under the cover of the night, carrying with them their wounded comrades. The government side suffered no casualty at all,¹⁴⁴

139. J.C.E., II, 331. Dastidar, 107-8. He gives the detailed programme of the raid.

140. V.R. to S. of S. Telegram No. 1165-S, 19 April, 1930, Register 1833 of 1930, P&J File No. 1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000.

141. The authorised strength of this force in 1930 was 834, and the actual strength in April, 1930 was 826. See Return showing the actual strength of the Army and Royal Air Force in India on the 1st May, 1930.

142. In February, 1930 it had an authorised strength of 420 and an actual strength of 398 organised in three squadrons including one motorised section. The entire regiment was British. Ibid. 1st February, 1930. L/MIL/17/5/1363.

143. Dastidar, 145-46.

144. G. of B. to S. of S. Telegram No. 5854 P., 23 April, 1930. Register No. 1895 of 1930, P&J File No. 1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000.

although a few authors of the sub-continent in their recent writings have spoken of 'heavy'¹⁴⁵ casualties on the government side, too, without, however, producing dependable evidence for this.

Then followed a hot chase for the capture of the absconders, but despite all-out efforts, it took a long time to account for all of them. A few minor skirmishes ensued between the raiders and government forces leading to more terrorist deaths, which by 1933 had risen to a total of twenty-two.¹⁴⁶ Meanwhile a large number of arrests¹⁴⁷ had been made under the Bengal Criminal Law Ordinance (Ordinance I) of 1930, promulgated the very next day after the raid had taken place, and later replaced by the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act IV of 1930. The principal leader of the raiders, Suryya Sen, however, evaded arrest till the beginning of 1933.¹⁴⁸

A protracted trial then followed. Thirty-six persons, accused either of actual participation or complicity in the raid,

145. R. C. Majumdar, Struggle for Freedom, 548; Dastidar, 154.

146. BPR, 1930, 30; BPR, 1932, 36.

147. The total number of persons dealt with under this instrument till the end of 1933 was, 2,521. BPR, 1933, 26. According to Joint Committee, II, 352, the total number was 2,167, the yearly break-up being: 1930-454; 1931-452; 1932-927, and 1933-334. The discrepancy is probably due to the reason that Joint Committee Report did not presumably give the figure for the whole of 1933. It may be mentioned here that the note of the Secretary of State for India in which the statistics were cited was dated 30 November, 1933.

148. JCE, II, 331, BPR, 1931, 24; India in 1932-33, 52.

were tried in three separate cases by separate tribunals between 1930 and 1933. Of the thirty accused tried in the first case, twelve were sentenced to transportation for life,¹⁴⁹ two to lesser terms¹⁵⁰ and the rest were acquitted, although they were simultaneously detained¹⁵¹ under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1930. There were three accused in the second case, of whom Ambika Chakravarty¹⁵² and Saroj Guha got a life term, the former's death sentence having been reversed by an appeal court. The third, Hemendu Dastidar, was acquitted only to be detained under the Act referred to above. Kalpana Dutt,¹⁵³ Suryya Sen and Tarakeswar Dastidar, who deputised for Sen after his arrest, were tried in the third case. Kalpana Dutt received a life sentence and the other two defendants were sentenced to death, and their execution early

149. IAR, 1932, I, 14; Statesman, 2 March, 1932; Purnendu Dastidar, 241-42. Ganesh Ghose, Ananta Singh, Lokenath Bal, Fanindra Nandy, Ananda Gupta, Lal Mohan Sen, Sahayram Das, Subodh Choudhuri, Sukhendu Dastidar, Fakir Sen, Subodh Roy, Ranadhir DasGupta were the persons sentenced to transportation for life and later removed to the Andamans.

150. They were Nandalal Singh, Anantu Singh's elder brother, sentenced to two years R.I., and Anilbandhu Das sent to borstal school.

151. IAR, 1932, I, 14; Dastidar, 242.

152. Ambika Chakravarty (1891-1962), Brahmin, was a clerk in customs department with very little formal education. After his release in 1946 from detention in the Andamans consequent upon his life imprisonment in the armoury raid case, he joined the Communist Party of India. He was returned to the West Bengal Assembly in 1952 as a communist party candidate, DNB, I, 246-47.

153. Kalpana (Dutt) Joshi (1913-), Kayasth, was recruited to the Chittagong Yugāntar party after the armoury

in 1934 finally brought the armoury raid episode to a close.

The shadow of terrorism, however, still lay heavy over Chittagong even a year after the abortive insurrection of 1930, despite the presence of troops and an additional police force. Persistent rumours early in 1931 of terrorist plans of the worst nature, often confirmed by government intelligence sources, had a demoralising effect¹⁵⁴ both on the district administrators, who felt they were not adequately equipped for such eventualities, and on the European population in the town. In April, 1931, the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, Chittagong, tired of the war of nerves offered to abdicate¹⁵⁵ their responsibilities to the military authorities under Martial Law. As the Divisional Commissioner, however, pointed out¹⁵⁶ to the Chief Secretary of the Province, the offer may well have been designed to induce government to grant them more effective powers and resources, but it was nevertheless a striking demonstration of the uncertainty they felt.

raid when she was a college-student. Her father was a Sub-Registrar. While detained in cellular jail in the Andamans, she became converted to Marxism and later married P. C. Joshi, an Indian communist leader. DNB, I, 389-90; Dastidar, 237.

154. See J. R. Johnson, District Superintendence of Police, Chittagong to Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Chittagong Division. Letter No. 32/S. P. /C II, 9 April, 1931; A. H. Khem, District Magistrate, Chittagong to the Commissioner, Chittagong Division, 14 April, 1931. Register 2422 of 1931, P&J File No. 1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000. See also G of B to G of I Letter No. 215 P.S.D., 20 April, 1931, in ibid.
155. See Johnson & Khem's letters.
156. W. H. Nelson, Commissioner, Chittagong Division to

The government, acting on the advice of the Commissioner, promptly reinforced the existing forces in the district with a battalion of the Gurkha Rifles, less two companies, who arrived in Chittagong from Shillong on 21 April, 1931.¹⁵⁷ The local civilian administration, authorised by the government in Calcutta, enforced tighter security measures for the safety of the members of the Special Tribunal trying the Armoury Raid case, who were under threat of attack. Public meetings, processions and the sale of fire-works and explosives were prohibited, and a curfew was imposed in the town between ten at night and four in the morning.¹⁵⁸ Early in May, 1931, arms, ammunitions and explosives were discovered during building work in one of the enclosures in the jail¹⁵⁹ occupied by the under-trial prisoners in the Armoury Raid case. The discovery lifted immediate apprehension of a violent attempt at a jail break by the terrorists. Nevertheless, hardly a month had gone by after this discovery when an explosive device attached to a remote control mechanism

Chief Secretary, G of B. Secret letter of 16 April, 1930. Register 2422 of 1931, P&J File No.1483 of 1930. L/P&J/6/2000.

157. G of B. to G. of I. Letter No.354 P.S.D., 2 May, 1931 in ibid.

158. G of B to G of I. Letter No.354. PSD, 2 May, 1931. Register 2422 of 1931, P&J File No.1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000.

159. G of B to G of I. Home Department. Letter No.526. P.S.D., 13 May 1931. Register 2631 of 1931. P&J File No.1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000; G of I to S of S. confidential letter No.D.3416/31-Poll., 19 May, 1931, ibid.

was recovered from under a road passing round the court buildings within which the case was being heard.¹⁶⁰

Presumably, the members of the Special Tribunal, the prosecution counsels and the crown witnesses, who used the road, were the intended targets of attack. How great the security risk to the members of the Special Tribunal was thought to be can be gauged from the fact that immediately after the conclusion of the first Armoury Raid case early in 1932, its President, James Yourie was 'whisked off'¹⁶¹ in an aircraft from the Chittagong polo ground, and his two Indian co-adjudicators, Roy Bahadur Narendranath Lahiri and Khan Bahadur Maulvi Abdul Hye, left Chittagong by steamer, a special train having been arranged as a 'blind'.¹⁶²

At the end of May, 1931, the Gurkhas were relieved in Chittagong by a detachment of two hundred Assam Rifles (Military Police) lent by the Assam Government.¹⁶³ The terrorists, however, lost no time in resuming their campaign of murder. Thus Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah, a Police Inspector, who had played a prominent role in the prosecution of the

160. BPR, 1931, 30.

161. R.N. Reid, Years of Change in Bengal and Assam, 68.

162. Ibid, 68.

163. G of I to S of S Telegram No.1444-S, 1 June, 1931. Register 2697 of 1931, P&J File No.1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000.

Chittagong armoury raiders as also in the drive against terrorism in general, was killed¹⁶⁴ in a terrorist attack in August, 1930. Then followed the murder of Captain Cameron of the 2/8th Gurkhas in June, 1932.¹⁶⁵ The last major terrorist outrage in Chittagong was a raid in September, 1932 on the Pahartali Railway Institute, a club for the subordinate European officials of the Assam Bengal Railway¹⁶⁶ by a group of ten or twelve youths led by a woman, Pritilata Waddeddar.¹⁶⁷ An elderly woman of sixty-five was killed and thirteen others wounded, none too seriously.¹⁶⁸ Waddeddar, who herself was hit by a shot fired by someone within the club was later found near the club dead from swallowing poison, while the others made good their escape.

164. BPR, 1931, 31; Statesman, 1 September, 1931.

165. BPR, 1932, 26; See also G of B. Police Department. Resolution No. 5535 PI of 17 October, 1933, ibid.

166. Ibid.

167. Pritilata Waddeddar (1911-1932), Kayasth, was a member of the Deepali Sangha and Chatrri Sangha, two quasi-revolutionary organizations for women. She came in contact with the former when she was a school-student at Dacca, and with the latter when she moved to the Bethune College, Calcutta in the later 1920's, from where she later graduated. She was then recruited to Suryya Sen's underground party after the armoury raid. Her father, Jagabandhu Waddeddar was a municipal clerk in Chittagong.

168. BPR, 1932, 25; Purnendu Dastidar's claim of a total number of casualties on the European side as over fifty is grossly exaggerated. Dastidar, 238.

A question which then legitimately follows is: what made Chittagong such a powerful terrorist stronghold during these years? Since terrorism had always been a caste and class dominated movement in Bengal, an examination of the composition and proportion of the caste Hindu population in the district may provide one answer to this question. According to the 1931-census,¹⁶⁹ the caste Hindus of ^{the} Chittagong district with a total of 226, 548 persons, 32,060 of them Brahmins, 184,735 Kayasths and 9753 Baidyas, formed more than half of the whole Hindu population¹⁷⁰ of the district. This was a higher proportion of upper caste Hindus than even Calcutta could boast of, for though the absolute number of high caste Hindus in Calcutta was 337,232, the highest for any district in Bengal, their proportion in the whole Hindu community¹⁷¹ was only a little over two-fifths. Again the Chittagong District Gazeteer tells us that most of the caste Hindus of the district, particularly the Kayasths, were descendents of immigrants who had arrived as revenue agents and clerks of the foreign rulers. The two police thanas (circles) of Patiya and Raojan were particular strongholds of bhadralok, producing 'the greatest number of pleaders and office clerks',¹⁷² in the district even at the turn of this century. How the bhadralok were affected in the 1930's by the dwindling return from land and

169. Census of India, 1931, V.I, 448.

170. Total Hindu population of Chittagong district in 1931 was 392,352.

171. Total Hindu population of Calcutta in 1931 was 822,293.

172. L.S.S. O'Malley, Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers. Chittagong, 58.

and tight employment situation has already been mentioned. The relationship between this demographic pattern, economic situation and terrorism is strongly suggested by the fact that fifty-one of the sixty-three terrorists involved in the Armoury Raid came from the town of Chittagong and its surrounding police thanas of Patiya, Raojan, Anoara and Boalkhali. Another factor which may well have encouraged the close coordination of the campaign of violence in Chittagong was the growing inter caste solidarity achieved through inter-marriage between Kayasths and Baidyas in Chittagong. That this social intercourse was no peripheral phenomenon was pointed to by the District Gazeteer's observation that in Chittagong a Kayasth father's first choice for bridegroom for his daughter was a Baidya and that he only 'failing a Baidya, falls back upon a Kayasth bridegroom'.¹⁷³ It is important to note that the leader of the Chittagong Yugāntar party, Suryya Sen, was a Baidya as were fifteen of the sixty-three armoury raiders, while the largest single caste group of them were Kayasths. The comparison made below¹⁷⁴ between the caste sample of the Sedition Committee Report, 1918¹⁷⁵ and that of the sixty-three

173. District Gazetteers, Chittagong, 60.

174.

| Sample | Size of the sample | Brahmin | Kayasth | Baidya | Others | Not recorded |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------------|
| Sedition Committee | 186 | 65 | 87 | 13 | 21 | - |
| Present Sample | 63 | 7 | 39 | 15 | - | 2 |

175. RCIRC, 93.

Chittagong raiders will further demonstrate the impact of the Kayasth-Baidya social rapport in Chittagong during the period.

The other marked feature of the statistics in the table is, of course, the much greater ^{number of 176 among} ~~youths~~ of the terrorists who took part in the Chittagong raid.

The Chittagong armoury raid, despite its failure to achieve anything tangible, had, nevertheless, galvanised various terrorist groups into action throughout the province.¹⁷⁷ In May, 1930, the Calcutta Yugantar party had drawn up a scheme of gue rilla action on the lines of the Chittagong exploit,¹⁷⁸ involving the disruption of communications, electricity and gas supplies, the destruction of petrol depots and massacre of Europeans in Calcutta and its suburbs.¹⁷⁹ Fortunately for the

| 176. | Sample | Size of sample | Age group | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|----------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | | 10-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | 31-35 | 36-45 |
| Sedition Committee | | 186 | 2 | 48 | 76 | 29 | 10 | 9 |
| Present | | 63 | 3 | 51 | 4 | 1 | 4 | - |

Include I over 45 years and II not recorded in the Sedition Committee sample.

177. J.C.E., II, 331 ; G of B. Police Department Resolution No. 3244 P.L., 31 July, 1931; BPR, 1930 Griffiths, 265.

178. BPR., August (1), 1930. For details of the terrorist scheme, see J.C.E., II, 332.

179. A terrorist leaflet in Bengali, Dhandora, confiscated in May, 1930, made an announcement of cash-rewards for the murder of government officials at the following rates: (a) a Police Sergeant- Rs 100; (b) a native Police officer - Rs 500; (c) a British Police Officer Rs 1000; (d) a Provincial Governor Rs 10,000. For the English version of the pamphlet see P&J File 4580 of 1929, L/P&J/6/1991.

government and the intended victims, the police had got the wind of it before the plan could mature. They promptly detained a number of suspects and thus foiled the conspiracy. This pre-emptive police move, did not, however, stop isolated terrorist actions from being committed. In August, 1930, Sir Charles Tegart, the Police Commissioner, Calcutta, had a hair's-breadth escape¹⁸⁰ in a bomb attack in a busy Calcutta street, although his Pathan driver was slightly injured. One of the assailants, Anuja SenGupta, died on the spot from the impact of the explosion, while the other, Dinesh Majumdar,¹⁸¹ was caught then and there, and later sentenced to imprisonment for life for this crime. The police investigation into this incident laid bare a deep rooted Yugantar conspiracy¹⁸² of assassination of high-ranking government officials. Consequently numerous arrests followed, and thirteen suspects were proceeded against. Eight of these accused, including a councillor of the Calcutta Corporation and medical practitioner, Dr. Narayan Chandra Ray, were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, from

180. FR., August (2), 1930. See also Sir Charles Tegart's own report to the Chief Secretary, Bengal Government, Tegart Papers, MSS, Box 1, Files 2 and 2(a); Taylor Papers MSS., CSAS.

181. Dinesh Chandra Majumdar (1907-1934), Baidya, was a member of the Yugantar party. Not much is known about him except that having lost his father at the age of six, he passed the B.A. examination with financial help from relatives. At the time of his attack on Sir Charles's life, he was a student studying law in Calcutta. He escaped from the jail while serving life sentence for the crime. He was later captured and executed in 1934 on fresh charges of murder and attempted murder of policemen. DNB, III, 20-22.

182. J. C. E., II, 333.

twenty years downwards.¹⁸³

Only five days after the attack on Sir Charles in Calcutta, F.J. Lowman, the Inspector General of Police, and Eric Hodson, Superintendent of Police, Dacca were critically wounded in a gun attack¹⁸⁴ on them on 29 August, 1930 at the Dacca Mitford Hospital where they had gone to visit an ailing colleague of theirs. Lowman subsequently succumbed to his injuries, while Hodson recovered after a protracted illness. The assailant, Benoy Krishna Bose,¹⁸⁵ a medical student at Dacca and member of the Bengal Volunteers, a newly-formed terrorist group, however, made good his escape. This attack was followed by the murder¹⁸⁶ in December, 1930 of an Indian Police-Inspector who was shot dead in mistake for T.J.A. Craig, Lowman's successor. The two assailants in this case, Ramkrishna Biswas¹⁸⁷ and Kalipada Chakravarti, both members of the Chittagong Yugantar party, were captured the following

183. Tegart Papers MSS, Box II, File 9; Charles Tegart, Police Commissioner to Chief Secretary, G of B Letter No.7557, 25 August, 1930. Register 5396 of 1930, P&J File No.1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000.

184. G. of I., Home Department to S. of S. Telegram No.D.6457, 29 August, 1930, Register 4933 of 1930, P&J File No.1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000; Chief Secretary, G. of B. to G. of I., Home Department, Letter No.1621 P.D., 11 September, 1930. Register 5652 of 1930, ibid; FR., August (2), 1930.

185. Benoy Krishna Bose (1908-1930) came of a middle class Kayasth family from Dacca district. His father was engineer. He joined the Bengal Volunteers terrorist group while a student of Mitford Medical School, Dacca. He was mortally wounded during the raid inside the Bengal Secretariat in Calcutta in December, 1930. D.N.B., I, 290-10.

day. They were later sentenced to death by a special tribunal, and although Biswas was duly executed,¹⁸⁸ Chakravarty's death sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life by an appeal court.¹⁸⁹

The year closed with a sensational terrorist outrage—a murderous assault right inside the Writers' Buildings, the Bengal Secretariat in Calcutta. On 8 December, 1930, three youths, Benoy Bose, Lowman's assassin, Dinesh Gupta¹⁹⁰ and Sudhir Gupta,¹⁹¹ all members of the Bengal Volunteers, slipped

186. J.C.E., II, 343; BPR, 1930, 31; Statesman, 2 & 3 December, 1930.
187. Ramkrishna Biswas (1911-1931) came of a middle class Kayasth family from Chittagong district. As an undergraduate science student, he became the explosive expert of the Chittagong Yugantar party. DNB, I, 197; Dastidar, 97.
188. BPR, 1930, 31.
189. Dastidar, 201.
190. Dinesh Gupta (1911-1931), Baidya, came from Midnapur district. His father was a Post Master and was posted at Jamalpur in Mymensingh district when the Writers' Buildings outrage occurred. Dinesh Gupta was an undergraduate student at Dacca College in July, 1930, when he left college to join the Civil Disobedience movement. It was probably about this time that he joined the Bengal Volunteers terrorist party and came to hold the charge of its Midnapur branch. One of his brothers was a pleader at Midnapur town and active in anti-government activity. DNB, III.
191. Sudhir (alias Badal) Gupta (1912-1930), Baidya, was the son of a village school teacher in Dacca district. His family had past revolutionary connection, two of his uncle having undergone long term imprisonment in the Alipore Bomb Case, 1909. DNB, II, 103-104.

into the 'security area' of the secretariat¹⁹² and opened fire killing the Inspector-General of Prisons, Col. N. S. Simpson,¹⁹³ and injuring the Judicial Secretary, J. W. Nelson,¹⁹⁴ and the Agriculture and Industries Departments' Secretary, H. P. V. Townend.¹⁹⁵ The finance Secretary, Alexander Marr, who was then also a member of the Governor's Executive Council, had a very narrow escape.¹⁹⁶ The assailants, who finally found themselves trapped inside Nelson's office, were, however, tackled by E. B. Jones, Assistant Inspector-General of Police, amongst other, who had rushed to the spot from his office in the same building on hearing the sound of shots.¹⁹⁷ When the terrorists were captured after a brief exchange of revolver fire, Sudhir Gupta was found dead, apparently from swallowing poison,¹⁹⁸ and the two others critically injured,¹⁹⁹ Benoy Bose dying subsequently in hospital.²⁰⁰ Dinesh Gupta was

192. G. of B. to G. of I., Home Department, Telegram No. 18129/32-P., 8 December, 1930. Register 6975 of 1930, P&J File No. 1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000; Charles Tegart to Chief Secretary, G. of B. Letter No. 10784, 16 December, 1930, ibid; FR., December (1), 1930; Statesman, 9 December, 1930.
193. FR., December (1), 1930; Taylor Papers, MSS; Statesman, 9 December, 1930; K. C. Ghosh, The Roll of Honour, 422.
194. FR., December (1), 1930; Statesman, 9 December, 1930; K. C. Ghosh, 423.
195. Reid, 60; FR., December (1), 1930; Taylor Papers, MSS.
196. Statesman, 9 December, 1930.
197. Reid, 60.
198. Tegart Papers, MSS, Box III, Reid, 61; Ghosh, 423.
199. There was a consensus of opinion that these injuries were self-inflicted in a desperate suicide attempt. See K. P. Biswas, 'when Writers' Buildings was raided' in Main Stream, VIII, 4, 27 September, 1969, 15; Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit-Roy, Bharate Sashastra Biplab (Armed Rebellion in India) 355; Tegart Papers, MSS, Box III.

executed²⁰¹ in July, 1931 after being sentenced to death on his recovery by a Special Tribunal.

The terrorist campaign of murder of high-ranking British officials and prominent non-officials showed no sign of abatement in subsequent years. Compared with the eight²⁰² abortive attempts made on the lives of British officials between 1906 and 1924, ten²⁰³ high-ranking British officials were actually killed and eleven²⁰⁴ others injured, some seriously, between 1930 and 1933. In Midnapur, three successive District Magistrates, J. Paddie, R. Douglas and B. E. J. Burge, all fell victim to the terrorist gun in 1931, 1932 and 1933 respectively.²⁰⁵ Another District Magistrate, C. G. B. Stevens, holding the charge of the Tippera district was killed in his

200. Liberty, 8 July, 1930, Ghosh, 424.

201. Liberty, 8 July, 1930; Advance, 7 July, 1930; Joint Committee, II, 333; Ghosh, 427.

202. Chief Secretary, G. of B. to Secretary, Home Department, G. of I., Confidential Letter No. 1051 P.S.D., 8 September, 1931. Home Department File No. 4147/32-Poll. G. of I. C.P. Procs., Vol. 81, Year 1932.

203. Calculated from a government statement in the Bengal Legislative See BLCP, XLIII, 5, 24 March, 1934, 584-587.

204. Ibid.

205. BPR, 1931, 29; BPR, 1932, 25; BPR, 1933, 24; Benoy Jiban Ghose, Murder of British Magistrates, 24-28, 39-46, 48-49.

office in 1931.²⁰⁶ This assassination added a new dimension to the terrorist campaign in as much as it marked the advent of women assassins on the scene. The two assassins in this case, Suniti Chaudhuri²⁰⁷ and Santi Ghose,²⁰⁸ were teen-aged school girls. They were caught on the spot and later sentenced to transportation for life, their lives having been spared in consideration of their age and sex. Two other British officials, R. R. Garlick, District and Session Judge, twenty-four Parganas, and E. B. Ellison, Additional Superintendent of Police, Tippera were also murdered during these years. Garlick was shot dead²⁰⁹ in his court room on 27 July, 1931 by a youth in retaliation²¹⁰

206. BPR, 1931, 32; Statesman, 15 December, 1931; PR, Dec. (1), 1931.

207. Suniti (Choudhury) Ghose (1917-), Kayasth, came from Tippera and was a member of the Yugāntar party. Two of her college-going brothers were also members of secret societies. In 1938 she was prematurely early released from jail where she was serving a life term. She then resumed her studies, and later passed the MBBS examination. She is now a full-time medical practitioner. She is married to an old revolutionary peer, Pradyat Kumar Ghose, a Trade Union leader of West Bengal, DNB, I, 299-300.

208. Santi (Ghose) Das, (1916-), Kayasth, came from Comilla, district headquarters of Tippera. Her father was a teacher in the local college. She belonged to the Yugāntar party. At present, she is a member of the Congress party, DNB, II, 59.

209. Statesman, 28 July, 1931. For the official version on the incident see Confidential Note of S. H. H. Mills, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta of 28 July, 1931 and his D. O. No. 01454-C of 28 July 1931, Register 3918 of 1931, P&J File No. 1483 of 1930, L/P&J/6/2000.

210. Ibid. A note was found on the assassin, which read: 'Be thou destroyed. This is the reward for the injustice done to Dinesh Gupta.' See Statesman, 28 July, 1931.

for the death sentence he had passed not long ago as the President of a Special Tribunal, on Dinesh Gupta for the Writers' Buildings outrage of 1930. The assassin too was shot down, and he died on the spot, probably from the effects of poison which he had swallowed simultaneously. The real identity of this youth and his party affiliation were never known.²¹¹ Ellison was wounded in a terrorist gun attack made on 29 July, 1932 and later succumbed²¹² to injuries. His assailant escaped.

Besides those actually killed, a number of other British officials had also come under terrorist fire, some escaping injured and others unharmed. Alexander Cassells, the Divisional Commissioner, Dacca, and L. G. Durno, the District Magistrate of Dacca in two terrorist attacks in August²¹³ and October,²¹⁴ 1931 respectively, thus escaped, Cassell with a bullet wound in the thigh which was not serious, and Durno, who was hit in the temple, with the loss of an eye and a prolonged illness. C. G. Grassby, the Additional Superintendent, District Intelligence Branch, Dacca, and A. W. Luke, the

211. Long after the event, another terrorist told the police that Garlick's assassin was one Kanailal Bhattacharyya who came from Midnapur. K. C. Ghosh, 507.

212. BPR, 1932, 25; FR July (2), 1932; IQR, 1932, II, 8.

213. FR August (2), 1931; Statesman, 22 August, 1931; BAR, 1931, 30-31.

214. BPR, 1931, 32; IQR, 1931, II, 22; FR October (1), 1931; Statesman, 29 October, 1931.

Superintendent of the Rajshahi District Jail, became the targets of terrorist attacks in August²¹⁵ and November,²¹⁶ 1932 respectively. Grossby was shot in the arm and Luke in the jaw and neck. Both recovered. Elsewhere in the province, the District Magistrate of Howrah, the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, Faridpur, and the Subdivisional Officer of Kandi in the Murshidabad district escaped unscathed in three different terrorist attacks in 1932.²¹⁷ The threat of terrorist attack on government officials, particularly Europeans, loomed so large and real that they were most carefully guarded and covered both in their residence and office.²¹⁸ Personal armed guards accompanied them wherever they went. Officers' clubs, their golf courses and other places of recreation they attended were similarly guarded.²¹⁹ At the Dacca club they even had a heavy machine gun installed on its roof.²²⁰ Some British officials like

215. BPR, 1932, 25-26; Statesman, 23 August, 1932; FR, 1 September (1), 1932.

216. BPR, 1932, 26; Statesman, 19 November, 1932.

217. BPR, 1932, 27; See also JCE, II, Annexure III, 347, which gives details of terrorist outrage during the years, 1930-33.

218. FR(2) September, 1932; R.N. Reid, 65.

219. Ibid, 65.

220. Baker Papers MSS, Vol.III. Letter No.14, from Baker to Norah, 7 January, 1932.

J. T. Donovan, the Collector of Barisal, who were dangerously exposed to terrorist attack, were sent out of India on short notice.²²¹

The non-official Britons too were not free from the danger of terrorist attacks. E. Villiers, a merchant and President of the European Association, and Sir Alfred Watson, editor of the Statesman were shot at in 1931 and 1932 respectively.²²² Both escaped with minor injuries. Sir Alfred had, in fact, two attacks made on his life within the span of little over a month. In the first he had escaped completely unhurt, although in the second he received injury as also did his secretary and Sikh chauffeur.²²³ Both Villiers and Sir Alfred seemed to have incurred the terrorist wrath by their strong anti-terrorist opinions, and it was probably no coincidence that the attack on Villiers came within a week of his making a public statement²²⁴ condemning terrorism in strong terms.

Thus by the early 1930's, the terrorist campaign had assumed such menacing proportions that even the Governor

221. Reid, 63-64; Royalists' pamphlet, n.d. (probably brought out on 29 October, 1931, as its contents indicated. P&J File No. 1483 of 1930 L/P&J/6/2000.

222. CPR, 1932, 13-14; Reid, 64, 71-72; Statesman, 30 October, 1931 and 6 August and 29 September, 1932.

223. CPR, 1932, 13-14.

224. Statesman, 22 October, 1931. He made the statement on 21 October and the attack came upon him on 29 October.

of the province was no longer immune from murderous attacks.

Sir Stanley Jackson, Governor of Bengal, 1927-32, thus had a providential escape²²⁵ in February, 1932 when a 21-year old girl, Bina Das,²²⁶ a graduate of Calcutta University fired three shots at him from close range, all near misses, at the annual convocation of the University. The assailant, herself a recipient of a degree at the ceremony, was promptly seized by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Col. Hassan Suhrawardy, when during the melee several more shots went off, one of them slightly injuring Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen, a teacher of the University. The assailant was later sentenced to nine years' rigorous imprisonment by a Special tribunal.²²⁷

225. FR, February (1), 1932; CPR, 1932, 11; Statesman, 7 February, 1932; Star of India, 6 and 7 February, 1932; Terrorism in India, 48.

226. Bina (Das) Bhowmik (1911-) came of a Brahmo family. Her father, Benimadhab Das, was a government pensioner, having retired as Head Master, Sanskrit Collegiate School, Calcutta. Bina Das was educated at Bethune and Diocesan College, Calcutta, and became involved with a Calcutta terrorist group. Her elder sister Kalyani Das (afterwards Kalyani Bhattacharya) and her brother, Nirmal Das too were involved in politics, the former having suffered incarceration during the Civil Disobedience movement. Bina Das got nine years' R.I. for the attempted murder of the Governor in 1932. On release in 1939, she joined the Congress party, and became the Secretary of the South Calcutta Congress. Later she was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly. She is married to Joytish Chandra Bhowmik, an ex-revolutionary colleague, and now a college-teacher. DNB, 1, 337; CPR, 1932, 11-12.

227. CPR, 1932, 11.

The incident occurred on 6 February, and reporting on the subject on 11 February to Sir Samuel Hoare, Viscount Templewood, Secretary of State for India, 1931-35, Sir Stanely wrote: "It was a disagreeable business—11 feet is a bit too close, and she knew how to handle the thing."²²⁸ Then he added: "The really fortunate thing was that the usual procedure was changed at the last moment, or she would have come up for her certificate to within 2 yards of me when she intended to do the deed."²²⁹

A little over two years after this incident, Sir Stanley's successor, Sir John Anderson (later Lord Waverley), who took over early in 1932, also became the target of an abortive terrorist attack²³⁰ in May, 1934. It came as he was watching the race for the Governor's Cup, the chief event of the 'Spring Meeting' at Lepong in the Darjeeling district.²³¹ Two youths, Bhawani Prasad Bhattacharya²³² and Rabindranath Banerji,

228. Templewood Collection, MSS. Eur. E.240, 14.

229. Ibid, 15.

230. John W. Wheeler-Bennett, John Anderson Viscount Waverley, 141-42; Reid, 77-79; Statesman, 9, 10 and 11 May, 1934; Star of India, 9 and 10 May, 1934.

231. Wheeler-Bennett, 141-42. Reid, 77-78. Reid's account of the incident differs a little in details from Wheeler-Bennett's.—The official biographer of Lord Waverley. See also Rakshit-Roy, 434, 491-504.

232. Bhawani Prasad Bhattacharya (1914-1935), Brahmin, was born and brought up at his aunt's house at Jaydevpur, Dacca, although his father originally came from Barisal. His aunt was married to one of the zamindars of the Bhawal Raj estate. He joined the Bengal Volunteers while a student of the local high school from where he passed the Matriculation examination in 1934. Rakshit-Roy, 495-496.

both Dacca men and members of the Bengal Volunteers terrorist group, fired unsuccessfully several shots at the Governor from a point blank range. They were, however, captured almost immediately, the former with shot-injuries caused by bullets fired by the Governor's personal guard. The two assailants and five others, including one teen-ager girl,²³³ were then tried by a special tribunal which sentenced the two assailants and another man to death,²³⁴ attempted murder having been made a capital offence under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932. The others got sentences ranging from transportation for life to twelve years' rigorous imprisonment.²³⁵ Of the three sentenced to death, only Bhawani Prasad Bhattacharya was executed,²³⁶ the sentences on the other two being commuted to transportation for life by the Governor.²³⁷ The younger of these

233. She was Ujjbala Majumdar, mentioned in CPR, 1934 as Amiya Majumdar, who was recruited to the Bengal Volunteers by her private tutor, a member of the same party. She was later married to Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy, a leading member of the party. Wheeler-Bennett, 142; Rakshit-Roy, 495, 497.

234. Star of India, 12 September, 1934; Statesman, 13 September, 1934; Ghosh, 545.

235. Star of India, 12 September, 1934; Statesman, 13 September, 1934; Rakshit-Roy, 434, 503.

236. Ghosh, 546; Durga Prasad Bhattacharya's (Bhawani Prasad's younger brother) letter of 10 February, 1970 to Rakshit Roy. Ibid, 558-562.

237. Wheeler-Bennett, 143; Ghosh, 545.

two, Rabindranath Benerji was, however, paroled in 1937 on a suspended sentence, later to be trained as an electrical engineer in England. Thereafter, having been granted a full pardon by the Bengal Government, he joined the Royal Air Force as a pilot during World War II, and later settled in Britain.²³⁸

The attempt on Sir John's life was the last major terrorist outrage in the long catalogue of such crimes in Bengal between 1930 and 1936, during which at least two hundred and sixty-nine²³⁹ terrorist incidents were reported. The great majority of these outrages occurred in the eastern districts of Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Bakerganj, Tippera and Chittagong.²⁴⁰ Most of these districts had, of

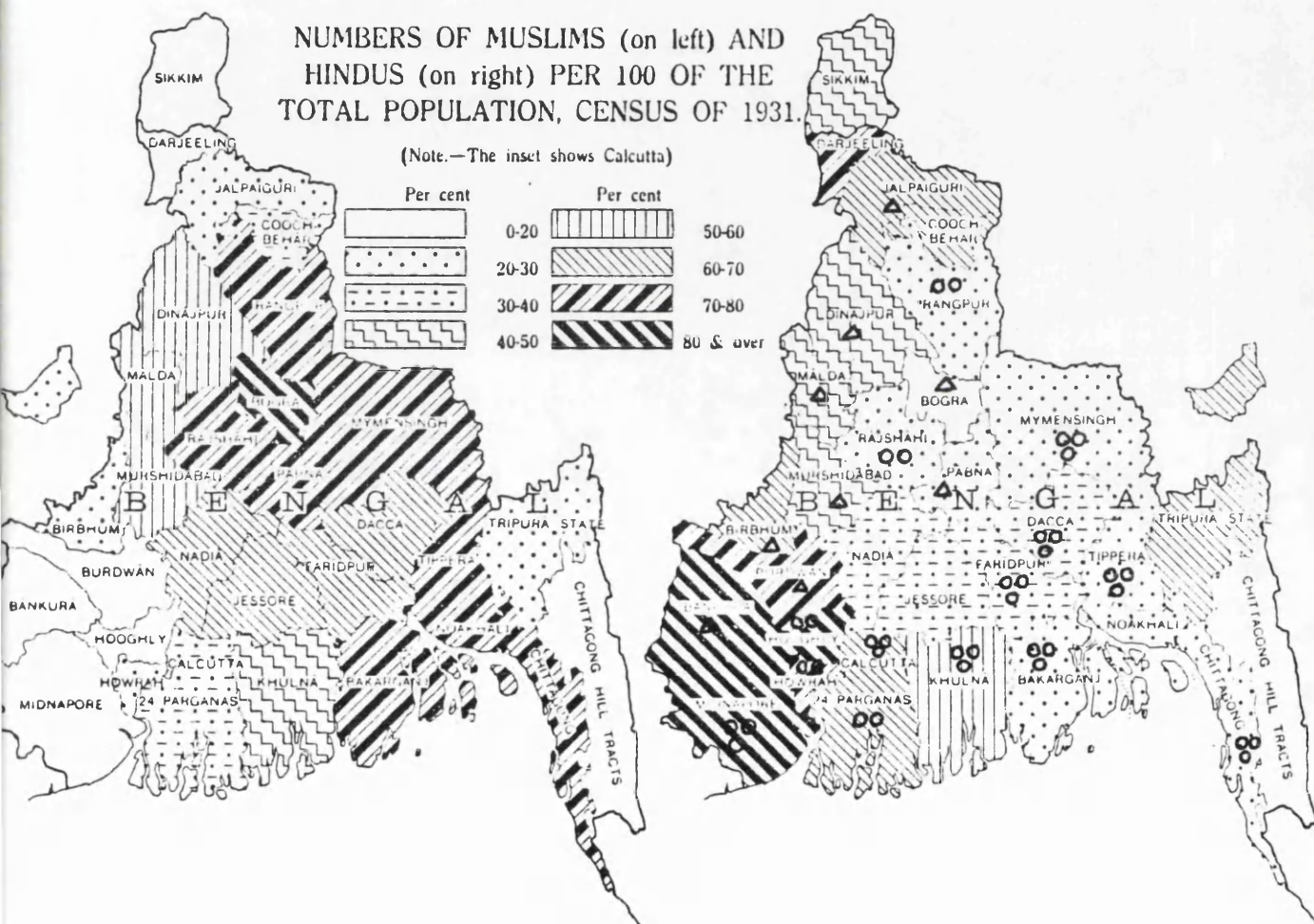
238. Wheeler-Bennett, 144-45.

239. Calculated from the statistics in BPR and CPR of this period; Terrorism in India and Joint Committee, II, 342-351. Following is a chart showing the yearly break-up of crimes, from 1930 to 1936.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Number of terrorist crimes</u> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1930 | 36 |
| 1931 | 66 |
| 1932 | 94 (Highest for a single year) |
| 1933 | 43 |
| 1934 | 18 |
| 1935 | 9 |
| 1936 | 3 |
| | <u>269</u> |

See also Appendix III and graph below showing the terrorist crimes district-wise from 1905 to 1926 and from 1927 to 1936.

240. See map and graph below.



Terrorist activities in Bengal, 1927-1936

- oo Areas of intensive terrorist activities
- oo Areas of moderate to heavy terrorist activities
- △ Areas of sporadic terrorist activities

Incidents of terrorist crimes in various districts of Bengal, 1927-1936

Scale - one vertical square indicates one actual crime.

Dacoity / Robbery

Assassination & murder

Others

15

10

5

40

35

30

25

20

15

10

5

Burdwan

Birbhum

Bankura

Midna-
pur

Hooghly

Howrah

24-Par-
ganahs

Cakutta

Nadia

Murshi-
dabad

Jessore

Khulna

Dacca

Mymen-
singh

Faridpur

Baker-
ganj

Tippera

Noakhali

Chitta-
gongRajsha-
hi

Dinajpur

Rangpur

Bogra

Sylhet

Incidents of crimes in various districts of Bengal, 1927-1936

Scale - one vertical square indicates fifty actual crimes.

Dacoity/Robbery

Murder & Gulpable homicide

Riots (including communal ones).

40

35

30

25

20

15

10

5

0

35

30

25

20

15

10

5

Burdwan

Birbhum

Bankura

Midnapur

Hooghly

Howrah

24 Parganas

Calcutta

Nadia

Murshidabad

Jessore

Khulna

Dacca

Mymensingh

Faridpur

Bakerganj

Tippera

Noakhali

Chittagong

Rajshahi

Dinajpur

Rangpur

Bogra

Pabna

course, also a record of a high incidence of such crimes as ordinary dacoity and murder and riots.²⁴¹ This alone, however, does not account for the high proportion of terrorist crimes, which were distinctly political in nature,²³⁶ in these districts. The explanation, therefore, lies elsewhere. It should be remembered, in the first place, that these places had come to have strong terrorist bases from their very inception in Bengal. The Dacca Anushilan Samiti, the 'most powerful'²³⁷ of all such associations had not only surpassed all others in organizational efficiency, but also became a by-word²³⁸ for violence between 1910 and 1917. Owing their growth to the anti-partition agitation, which had made its impact felt more in eastern than western Bengal, these samitis also enjoyed the protection and patronage of the Hindu social and political leaders who had thrown their full weight behind the agitation. At Jamalpur in

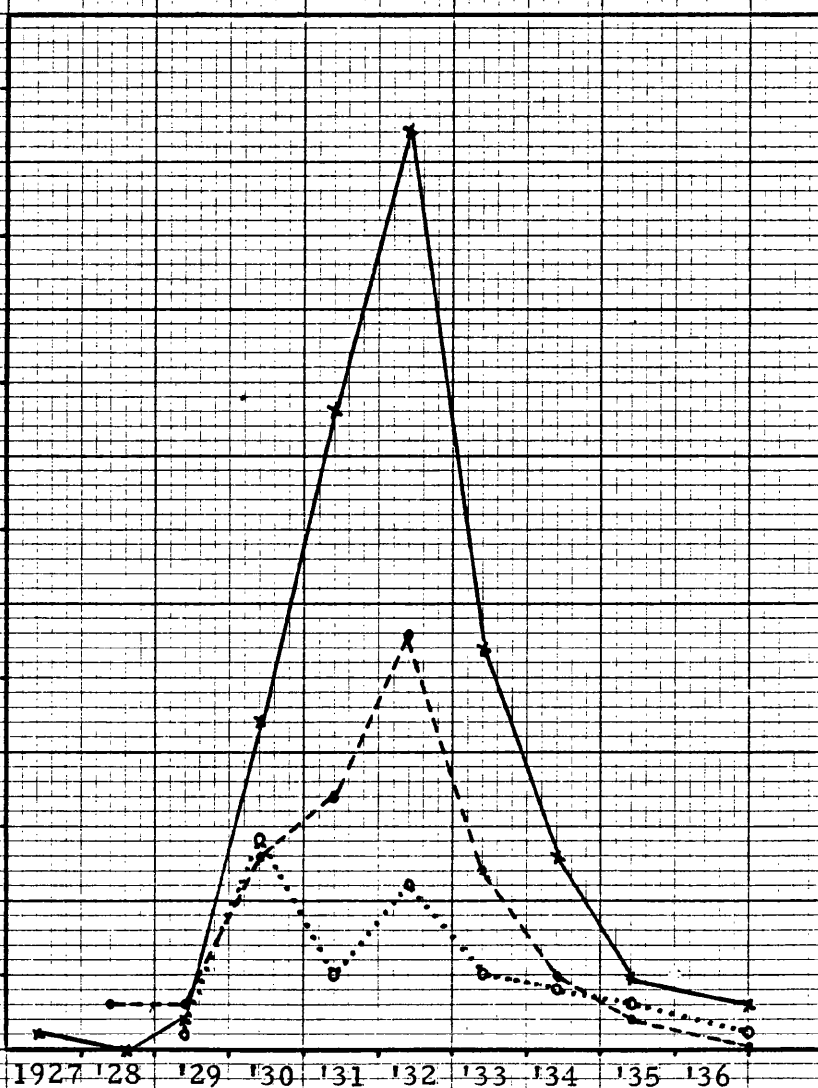
241. See Appendix V for the statistics of total number of crimes, district-wise, 1927-1935. Of the total of 7,946 murder and culpable homicide during the period 3,384 (42.5%) occurred in the Dacca and Chittagong divisions. Mymensingh district with 1,194 such crimes led the provincial crime league table and Bakerganj district with a score of 751 murders became the provincial runner-up. Dacca district with 559 murders became fourth, while the third place was snatched away by twenty-four Parganas district in the Presidency Division with 574 incidents. On the other hand, 4,099 out of the provincial total of 8,452 cases of rioting and unlawful assemblies occurred in the Dacca and Chittagong division during this period. See graph below.

242. The classification of crimes into ordinary and politically-motivated categories is based on the distinction made in the compilation of crime statistics by the police department during the period. There is no other way of verifying that at this distance of time. It should also be noted that many ex-terrorists and other authors who have written on the subject of terrorism in Bengal, have not contested the police statistics in this respect.

Terrorist crimes in Bengal from 1927 to 1936
Scale - one square for one actual crime

290

x—x Dacoity/Robbery
•- - - • Others
o.....o Murder



the Mymensingh District and at Barisal, for instance many of the employees of the local zamindari estates actively assisted in the recruitment of Swadeshi volunteers on behalf of the local Samities.²⁴⁵ Secondly, eastern Bengal had traditionally remained peripheral to the processes of imperial consolidation, and was not fully integrated into the body politic of the sub-continent even at the beginning of this century due mainly to the enormous problems of communication posed by her riverine geography and annual massive floods. This feature, combined with inadequate government resources²⁴⁶ to guard against possible terrorist incursions, was definitely a point of advantage to the terrorists in this region. In contrast, Western Bengal, occupying the morbid region of the Bengal delta with more stable lines of communication and better social cohesion, had the

243. 'The existence of this body alone, even if there had been no other, would have constituted a public danger.'
RCIRC, 46.

244. Halder, 242.

245. Gordon Johnson, 'Partition, Agitation and Congress: Bengal, 1904 to 1908' in Gallagher and others (eds), 242-249.

246. In Bengal an average police thana in the late 1920's comprised an area over one hundred and fifty square miles and was staffed with one Sub-Inspector, one or two Assistant Sub-Inspectors and sixteen to eighteen constables depending upon the size of the thana and the crime rate in it. In January, 1929, the total strength of the police force, both officers and men, was 24,225. See A.E. O'Sullivan's (Inspector-General of Police, Bengal) deposition before the Statutory Commission. Simon Commission, XV, 381 and 385.

longest continuous contact with the British in India, and so was better integrated into the British-Indian structure. Besides this the prodigious growth of Calcutta in this region as the imperial and university city, sea-port, and industrial and commercial centre enabled the West Bengal elite' more than their east Bengal counterpart to seize the material and intellectual benefits that it had brought in its wake.²⁴⁷ The east Bengal bhadralok, doubtless, had a share in the new professions of law, medicine, etc. and in the white-collar jobs in government offices and commercial firms, concentrated mainly in Calcutta. They were, nevertheless, handicapped in relation to their West Bengal counterparts who despised them as the Bāngāl²⁴⁸ or the rustic and the uncouth. As jobs became scarce after World War I, an east Bengal youth found it all the harder to find one as most of the head clerks (bara bābus) in offices and firms, who normally recruited the junior clerks, were predominantly West Bengal men and were not above nepotism and regional bias. The dissatisfactions of the West Bengal bhadralok thus probably were not so overwhelming as to drive them into the fold of terrorist organization^{which were} never very strong there. In fact, after the Alipore Bomb case, 1909,

247. Calcutta had also become the nerve centre of politics. But the activist youths of Calcutta were mostly from the eastern districts, either students residing in privately-managed students' messes and with relations or seeking some kind of clerical jobs.

248. Nirad C. Choudhury, The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, 368.

the principal West Bengal terrorist organization, the Yugāntar, was not in working order for some time, and when the party was reorganised, its leaders concentrated more on an Indo-German conspiracy and an armed uprising than on isolated and individual terrorism.²⁴⁹ The demographic pattern and the geographical distribution of the caste Hindus of Bengal may also probably provide a clue to the greater involvement of the east Bengal bhadraḷok into the terrorist movement. According to the 1931-census, nearly two-thirds of the Kayasths and over one of half of the Baidyas of Bengal, who dominated the terrorist campaign, had come from the districts of Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Bakerganj, Tippera, Noakhali and Chittagong²⁵⁰ which were also Muslim majority areas. Although terrorism did not openly take any communal colour, the belated emergence of a competing Muslim elite gradually asserting themselves in politics, claiming for themselves a share in imported institutions and government jobs in a proportion commensurate with their numerical strength and ~~their~~ past political role in the sub-continent, presented a definite stress-point for the bhadraḷok who had so far virtually monopolised all the institutional and job opportunities opened by the British rule. This in turn probably accentuated²⁵¹ the terroristic bias of the bhadraḷok in eastern Bengal.

249. Mukherjee, 361, 382-83, passim.

250. The total number of caste Hindus in Bengal in 1931 was 3,093,328—1,438,226 Brahmins, 1,545,554 Kayasths and 109,548 Baidyas. Their total number in these districts was 1,330,021—350,597 Brahmins, 923,217 Kayasths and 56,207 Baidyas. Census of India, V, II, 1931. Imperial Table XVII, 226, 229, 232.

Now to turn to the official reaction to the terrorist situation. The government, armed with special powers under numerous Executive Ordinances and legislative acts widely supplementing the normal provisions of the Indian Penal and Criminal Procedure Codes, took very strong countermeasures to quell violence. These began with detention without trial and other curbs on ^{civil} liberties under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance I of 1930,²⁵² later substituted by the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1930,²⁵³ under which 3513²⁵⁴ persons had been dealt with by the end of 1935. Not only were persons proceeded against but in some cases properties were attached, collective fines imposed²⁵⁵ and punitive police²⁵⁶ posted at the cost of local people in recalcitrant areas like Chittagong and Midnapore under the

251. B. C. Chatterjee and J. L. Banerjee, two caste Hindu leaders from Bengal stressed this point in their evidence before the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, 1933. See Joint Committee Evidence, 1400-1401, 1424.

252. This Ordinance was promulgated on 19 April, 1930, the day following the raid on the Chittagong armouries. The Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary, 19 April 1931.

253. BLCP, XXXV, 733. The bill was passed by 61 to 15 votes on 23 August, 1930.

254. BPR, 1935.

255. Upto March 1933 a collective fine of Rs. 85,000 had been imposed on inhabitants of several places in Chittagong to combat terrorism, of which Rs. 65080-8-0 was realised. Similarly a fine of Rs. 7900 had been imposed on the inhabitants of several villages in the Midnapur district in connection with Civil Disobedience Movement. W. D. R. Prentice, Member, Political Department in reply to a question in the legislature. See BLCP, XLI, 2, 88-90. 14 March, 1933.

256. The Calcutta Gazette, Extraordinary, 1 May 1931. Punitive police were posted in fifty-three villages in five police thanas of Chittagong district.

Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinances IX and XI of 1931.²⁵⁷ The last named instrument also provided for trial of terrorists by Special Tribunals and Special Magistrates. These special courts could, and actually did, hold trials in camera, at times even barring the accused themselves from the proceedings. Their power to take cognizance of crimes for which an accused was not formally indicated, and to regard any confessional statement made before a Magistrate as substantive evidence, produced what the Government held to be most salutary results. Strong deterrents were also provided by the enhancement of punishment for terrorist crimes under the Bengal Criminal Law (Arms and Explosives) Act, 1932²⁵⁸ and the Bengal Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act, 1932.²⁵⁹ The former raised the maximum of three years imprisonment for offences under the Indian Arms Act, 1878 and the Explosive Substances Act, 1908 to transportation for life, while the latter made attempted murder a capital offence.

To further impress all active terrorists and their sympathisers, a number of detenus were removed to distant places in India under a provision of the Bengal Criminal Law

257. For full text of the Ordinance, See East India (Emergency) Measures, cmd. 4014 of 1932., 85-95; The Gazette of India, Extraordinary, 29 October, 1931.

258. The Bill was passed without division on 5 December, 1932, the very day it was presented in the legislature. BLCP, 1932, XL.2., 230.

259. The Bill was passed on 1 September, 1932 by fifty-five to eighteen votes. BLCP, 1932, XXXIX.5., 313.

Amendment (Supplementary) Act, 1932.²⁶⁰ About five hundred of them were thus transferred to special jails at Deoli in Ajmer-Marwar.²⁶¹ At the same time, the government in 1932, after a gap of ten years, resumed transportation to the Andamans²⁶² of prisoners convicted of violent crimes. A large number of such prisoners were transported between 1932 and 1935, and of 228 prisoners in the Andamans in April, 1935, all but twenty-eight were from Bengal.²⁶³

The terrorist campaign in Bengal suffered a further blow from the government's firmness in dealing with the extremist Indian press described by one official report in 1931 with a cheerful mixing of metaphors as not only a "tower" of terrorist strength but also as one of its best recruiting agencies.²⁶⁴ Indeed, every escalation of terrorism in Bengal was marked by an adulatory outburst in the extremist newspapers. Two leading daily Bengali newspapers published from Calcutta during this period were the Dainik Basumati—according to its own

260. BAR, 1931-32, XIX. The Bill was passed on 24 February, 1932 by forty-nine to eighteen votes. BLCP., 1932, XXXVIII.2., 150-51.

261. BAR, 1931-32, XIX.

262. BAR, 1932-33, 23. Twenty extra cells were built in one cellular jail in 1933. BAR, 1933-34, 19.

263. Chief Commissioner, Andaman and Nikobar Islands to Secretary, Home Department, G of I. Letter No.1956, 1 April, 1935. Home Department File No.F.72/35-Jails, G of I. Jail Proceedings, Vol.1930 of 1935; BLCP, 1935, [XLVI.1.85]. See answer given by Sir R.N.Reid, Member-incharge, Home to a question of P. Banerjee, MLC, on 31 July, 1935.

264. G of B. to G. of I. Letter No.2006 P.S., 10 June, 1931, quoted in 'Note prepared by B.R.Sen, Deputy Secretary,

description of 'independent, non-party and nationalist daily'—²⁶⁵
 and the Ananda Bazar Patrika, professedly a pro-Gandhi organ
 strongly espousing the cause of the Civil Disobedience movement.²⁶⁶
 The former had a certified circulation of 60,000²⁶⁷ in 1930,
 while the latter claimed a readership of 50,000²⁶⁸ in 1935.
 These two papers had further reinforced the number of their
 readers by the publication of their weekly and monthly anciliaries,²⁶⁹
 and thus came to exercise a great influence on middle class
 public opinion. It is of particular interest to note that the first
 editor of the weekly Basumati, Upendranath Benerjee,²⁷⁰ was

(Political and Appointment Departments) and Press Officer,
 Government of Bengal'. G of I, C.P. Procs. Vol. 83A,
 Year 1934; Reid Collection, MSS. Eur. I. 278, 2.

265. Thacker's Indian Dictionary, 1931.

266. Indra Mitra, Itihase Ananda Bazar (Ananda Bazar in
 history). See Introduction, 2-3.

267. Thacker's Indian Dictionary, 1931.

268. See Satyendranath Mazumdar's (editor, Ananda Bazar
 Patrika) petition to Government of Bengal, 18 September,
 1935. Indra Mitra, 100.

269. The weekly Basumati had a circulation of 48,000 and the
 monthly Basumati of 15,000 in 1931. See Thacker's
Indian Dictionary, 1931.

270. Upendra Nath Benerjee (1879-1950), Brahmin, came
 from French Chandennagar. After passing the F.A.
 from Deupeix College in 1898, he studied first at the
 Medical College for a few years and then at Duff College,
 but left them without completing his studies. He then
 joined the order of the Ramkrishna Mission as a lay monk.
 Meanwhile he had also become an initiated member of
 Barindra Kumar Ghose's terrorist party. He was
 sentenced to transportation for life in the Alipore Bomb
 Case, 1909, but released prematurely in 1920. He then
 joined the Swarjya Party and was taken on the edito-
 rial board of the Bijali, the Naryan and the Atma Shakti.
 He later joined the Hindu Mahasabha, DNB.I, 129-30.

a well-known revolutionary leader and that one of his successors, Barindra Kumar Ghose was still more famous as a revolutionary. Similarly, Suresh Chandra Majumdar,²⁷¹ one of the principal founders of the daily Ananda Bazar Patrika and later Managing Director, Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd., and Makhanlal Sen,²⁷² editor of the Patrika in the early 1930's, had also had²⁷³ revolutionary connections. Both papers and their subsidiaries, therefore, gave the most highly-coloured and exaggerated accounts of all violent anti-British political activity.

The Amrita Bazar Patrika, the oldest nationalist organ in Bengal, the Liberty and the Advance, the mouth-pieces of two warring factions within the Bengal Congress, viz. the Subhas Bose and J. M. Sen Gupta groups, were amongst the other Calcutta-based Indian-owned English dailies which had captivated the minds of the politically-articulated Bengali

271. Suresh Chandra Majumdar (1888-1954), Kayasth, did not have much formal education. He joined the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti in its early stage. He was arrested for complicity in the murder of an Indian Police officer in 1910 and then in connection with a dacoity case, although no formal charge was made in either case. He later became the Managing Director of the Ananda Bazar Patrika Ltd. Indra Mitra, 3, 143-144; Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, 666.

272. Makhanlal Sen (1881-1965), Baidya, came from Dacca district. His father was an assistant surgeon at Chittagong. He joined the Swadeshi agitation when he was an M.A. student in Calcutta and subsequently joined the Anushilan party. He was arrested in 1915 under the Defence of India Act, and on his release in 1920 joined the Congress. He became the editor of the Ananda Bazar Patrika in November, 1930, and later he became the General Manager of both the Ananda Bazar Patrika and the Hindustan Standard. He was arrested in 1932 under the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act 1931, and in 1938 on a charge of sedition.

intelligentsia. The Bose and the Sen Gupta factions had aligned themselves with the Yugantar and the Anushilan parties respectively²⁷⁴ and their respective party organs vied with each other in highlighting the 'courage' and 'sacrifice' of the Bengali terrorists.

Besides these, the terrorists had their own vernacular journals too. From the beginning of the 1920's they brought out numerous journals²⁷⁵ like the Atma-Shakti (Self-Reliance), the Bijali (Lightning), the Sarathi (Pioneer), the Mukti-Kām (Freedom Seeker). The editor of the Atma Shakti and the Bijali, Upendra Nath Banerjee, and the manager of the Atma Shakti, Gyan Charan Das, were two very well-known revolutionaries. So was the editor of the Sarathi, Anil Baran Roy. Then the Swadhinata (Freedom) an organ of the Yugantar party, described in an official report as 'an incorrigible and most seditious' paper,²⁷⁶ made its appearance in 1929²⁷⁷ under the editorship of Bhupendra Kumar Dutt,²⁷⁸ a leading

He later brought out a new newspaper, the Bharat. In 1947 he joined the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jana Sangh. He died in 1965 when he was a teacher in the Journalism Department, Calcutta University. DNB, IV, 178-79.

273. A bi-weekly edition of the Ananda Bazar Patrika was started in 1923 and a weekly subsidiary, the Desh (Country) in 1933. Soon after, an English daily, the Hindustan Standard was launched by the same management.

274. Mukherjee, 602; Legislative Assembly Debates, V, 1935, 917.

275. 'Note on the necessity of legislation to control the Press on the expiry of the Press (Emergency Powers) Act in December, 1935 prepared by the Press Officer, G of B. Home Department File No. 33/2 Poll. of 1934, C.P. Procs. Vol. 83A, Year 1934.

276. FR(2), March, 1930.

277. Mukherjee, 528.

278. Bhupendra Kumar Dutt (1894-), Kayasth, came from

terrorist. This was followed by the Shankha (Conch-Shell), the organ of the Anushilan Party²⁷⁹ and another monthly journal, the Benu (Flute),²⁸⁰ the party organ of the Bengal Volunteers terrorist group.

These papers indulged in anti-government propaganda which took the form of denunciation of what they called the economic oppression of the British and exaltation in mystical and poetic language of the 'courage' and sacrifice of the terrorists.²⁸¹ They decried every sentence passed on the terrorists and hailed every acquittal with delight.²⁸² For instance, several newspapers wrote approvingly of the Chittagong Armoury Raid in 1930, and the Swadhinata practically went into

Jessore. He gave up studies while he was an undergraduate student and joined first the Anushilan Samiti and then switched over to the Yugantar party. His father was an employee at the Zamindari estate of Narail in Jessore district. He was incarcerated several times for his revolutionary activity. After independence in 1947, he was elected to the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) Legislature. He retired from politics in 1962 and migrated to India. DNB, I, 383-84.

279. Mukherjee, 535.

280. The Benu was started in 1926 under the editorship of Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit-Roy and it ceased publication in 1932. Bipradas, a novel by the prominent Bengali novelist Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, was first published in parts in this journal. Rakshit Roy, 434-35.

281. JCE, II, 326.

282. BPR, 1931, 28; J. C. E., II, 326-27, 334, 337.

rhapsodies in a leading article entitled 'Bravo Chittagong!'²⁸³ The Writers' Building outrage of 1930 and the events following it, already mentioned above, also got a coverage in the nationalist press most favourable to the terrorists involved in it as also to the campaign of violence. These newspapers while publishing detailed accounts of the condition of Benoy Bose and Dinesh Gupta, two terrorists who were captured, critically ill, during the commission of this outrage, only casually mentioned the condition of J.W. Nelson, a victim of the attack saying that he was making 'good progress'.²⁸⁴ The Liberty gave a graphic description of 'Pathetic Hospital Scene'²⁸⁵ by Benoy Bose's bed-side when his parents visited him. The nationalist newspapers had also capitalised on the execution of Dinesh Gupta in July 1931 for the Writers' Building outrage and that of Ramkrishna Biswas in August, 1931 for the murder of an Indian Police officer to whip up anti-government sentiments and elicit public sympathy for these two terrorists. The Advance²⁸⁶ paid homage to Dinesh Gupta in the characteristically mystical and emotive language of the Indian nationalist press thus:

283. FR May (1), 1930. The article appeared in the issue of 24 April, 1930. B.R. Sen's note. Home Department File No. 33/2 Poll. of 1934, G of I., C.P. Procs, Vol. 83A, Year 1934.

284. B.R. Sen's note. Home Department File No. 33/2-Poll. of 1934, G of I. C.P. Procs., Vol. 83A, Year 1934.

285. Liberty, 12 December, 1930.

286. Advance, 7 July, 1931. See B.R. Sen's note.

'And Death is all the brighter that he died,
And Heaven is all the happier that he is there,
Yet what is all that fires a hero's scorn
of Death? —the hope to live in hearts unborn'.

The leader continued, 'The law of the land has exacted its pound of flesh. The judicial machinery, like the car of Juggarnath, has run its course. A mother's tearful prayers for mercy, supported by the united voice of the people, went in vain. The hangman has done his duty'.²⁸⁷ Other newspapers, both in Calcutta and in the mofussil, wrote in the same vein on this occasion. The Faridpur Hitaishi,²⁸⁸ a journal published from the district headquarter of Faridpur hailing Dinesh Gupta as a 'hero who has conquered death', wrote insinuatingly, 'Bengal will be able to accept the deathless life with which you (Dinesh Gupta) have endowed her'. The Hindu Ranjika of Rajshahi, the Desher Bāni of Noakhali, the Sārathi of Barisal, the Hijli Hitaishi of Contai, Midnapur, the Bānglar Bāni and the Jayashree of Dacca wrote in much the same tone.²⁸⁹

The execution of Ramkrishna Biswas was again another occasion of emotional outbursts in the nationalist papers. The Advance and the Liberty published his life-sketch, and the Panchajanya, a Bengali daily published from Chittagong,

287. Advance, 7 July, 1931

, 288. Faridpur Hitaishi, 14 July, 1931. See B.R. Sen's note.

289. Hindu Ranjika, 13 July, 1931; Desher Bani, 15 July, 1931; Sarathi, 18 July, 1931; The Hijli Hitaishi, 9 July 1931; Bānglar Bāni, 16 July, 1931; Jayashree, Shriran, 1338 (June; July, 1931).

Ramkrishna's home town, carried an article on him under the heading, 'Lesson of murder'²⁹⁰ which stressed the 'great need for such self-sacrificing man as Ramkrishna in the battle for the freedom of India'.²⁹¹

To deal with such a refractory press, the government had imposed strict press-censorship and required the offending newspapers and their printing houses to deposit cash securities as guarantee of good conduct under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance II of 1930²⁹² and the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931.²⁹³ According to an official report,²⁹⁴ Rs. 55,300 was demanded as security from forty-three newspapers²⁹⁵ and Rs. 57,600 from forty-one printing presses²⁹⁶ between 1932 and 1934 under the Indian

290. Panchajanya, 6 August, 1931. Quoted in Statesman, 13 August, 1931.

291. Ibid.

292. Calcutta Gazette Extra-Ordinary, 27 April, 1930.

293. This Act prohibited, under pain of forfeiture of the offending newspapers and printing presses, publication of news items directly or indirectly inciting sedition or violence as well as publication of names and identity of a certain class of witness. This had also empowered the executive to seize and destroy unauthorised news-sheets and newspapers and to order the forfeiture of presses producing them.

294. 'Statement I. Statement of action taken against Newspapers and Press (in Bengal) under the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931 during the period from 1 January, 1932 to 31 December, 1934. Home Department File No.33/2-Poll. of 1934, G of I, C.P. Procs. Vol. 83A, Year 1934.

295. Calculated from ibid. See Appendix III of the statement.

296. Calculated from ibid.

Press Act, 1931. Eighteen of these papers had paid a total of Rs. 32,300²⁹⁷ the demand having been reduced in three cases,²⁹⁸ though a sum of Rs. 3000 was refunded to two papers,²⁹⁹ on appeal. Twenty-one newspapers ceased publication during this period. Similarly, twenty printing presses had deposited Rs. 37,600 as securities demanded of them.³⁰⁰ Thirteen presses closed down. Parts of securities of five newspapers, amounting to Rs. 3300, and that of four presses, amounting to Rs. 3000, were forfeited,³⁰¹ and fresh enhanced securities to a total of Rs. 31,000 were demanded of them.³⁰²

Actions were also simultaneously taken against offending newspapers and presses, authors and publishers, under the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code. Thirty one such cases were instituted during 1930-31,³⁰³ and twenty-four during 1931-32.³⁰⁴ Fifty-one warnings were issued

297. *Home Department File No. 33/2-Poll. of 1934, G. of I.*

298. *C.P. Procs., vol. 83A, year 1934*

299. Ibid.

300. Statement of action taken against Newspapers and Press.
Home Department File No. 33/2-Poll. of 1934, G of I.
C. P. Procs. Vol. 83A, Year 1934.

301. Ibid.

302. Ibid.

303. BAR, 1930-31, 170.

304. BAR, 1931-32, 171.

during 1930-31³⁰⁵ and forty-nine during 1931-32³⁰⁶ cautioning newspapers, presses, authors and publishers against infringement of the laws of sedition and the press regulations. Further pressure was brought to bear upon newspapers by the official control of press-advertisements.³⁰⁷ Consequently the Indian press was so subdued by the end of 1933 that many papers not only published anti-terrorist materials supplied by the Government Press Officer, but also forcefully pointed out of their own accord the futility of terrorism as a political weapon.³⁰⁸ A few papers even secretly received editorial articles from the Press Officer.³⁰⁹

In another direction, the Government called in troops and Military Intelligence officers in aid of the civilian administration. One battalion of British Infantry and six battalions of Indian Infantry were posted³¹⁰ in 1932 in Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Tippera, Chittagong, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bankura and Midnapur, and the troops were not withdrawn till terrorism³¹¹ was finally crushed in the province. The presence of troops while raising both service morale and public confidence,

305. BAR, 1930-31, 170.

306. BAR, 1931-32, 171.

307. Reid Collection, I. O. L. MSS. Eur. I 278/2.

308. B.R. Sen's note. See extracts from various newspapers.

309. Ibid.

310. BAR, 1931-32, XIX; Ibid, 1933-34, XXIX; Reid, 72; Wheeler-Bennett, 138; FR September (2), 1932.

311. Reid, 72; Wheeler-Bennett, 138.

particularly amongst the European population, had a demoralising effect on the active terrorists and their sympathisers.³¹² Military Intelligence Officers³¹³ working alongside the police intelligence, had great successes in discovering and capturing large quantities of illegal arms and ammunition,³¹⁴ and thus in checking the arms-trafficking. The combined military and police operations had also laid bare new terrorist plots in their nascent stage. Thus following the appearance in September, 1932 of a highly seditious leaflet entitled Swādhin Bharat³¹⁵ (Independent India) declaring the resumption of the campaign of indiscriminate murder of government officials, members of the Royalist Association, an anti-terrorist body formed by Europeans in Calcutta in 1931, and all others cooperating with the government in suppressing terrorism, the police unearthed a deep-rooted Anushilan conspiracy for renewed violence. Early in 1933, the police seized a list of

312. G. of B. Police Dept. Resolution No. 3244 Pl., 31 July, 1931. Proceedings of the G. of B. Police Dept., No. 13; BAR, 1931-32, xix ; BAR, 1933-34, xxix-xxxii.

313. Government of India, Army Department to the Chief of the General Staff. Letter No. 37334/1 (G.S.-S.D.2) of 15 September, 1934. Home Department File No. 45/23/34. G of I. C.P. Procs., Vol. 83A, Year 1934. The number of Military Intelligence officers was raised from four in 1930 to over a dozen in 1934. G.O.C.-in-Chief, Eastern Command to the Chief of the General Staff. Letter No. 74157/23/GS of 27 April, 1934. G of I CP Procs. Vol. 83A, Year 1934; BPR, 1934, 22; Wheeler-Bennett, 138.

314. At least two hundred and thirty-seven revolvers and pistols, besides large quantities of cartridges and explosives, were captured between 1930 and 1934. BPR, 1934-35, XXXI.

315. CPR, 1932, 18.

cypher addresses³¹⁶ from Probhat Chakravarty, a leading member of the Anushilan party, who had been evading arrest since absconding from a detention camp in 1930. This led to the recovery of more incriminating documents from a house in Calcutta³¹⁷ and to the arrest of one hundred and ninety persons—one hundred and thirty four from different parts of Bengal and the rest from as far off as the Punjab and Madras.³¹⁸ Thirty-eight of them were subsequently proceeded against in, what is called, the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy case which ended in the conviction of thirty-one accused who received sentences ranging from transportation for life to lesser terms.³¹⁹ Almost simultaneously, thirty-three other Anushilanites were prosecuted in another case, the Titagarh conspiracy case³²⁰ following the discovery of new seditious documents at Titagarh and Belgheria in Calcutta. Sixteen of the conspirators were convicted, one being sentenced to imprisonment for life and others to shorter terms.³²¹ These two cases had such a shattering effect on the Anushilan party that it never recovered from the blow.³²²

316. Terrorism in India, 53-54; Griffiths, 270.

317. CPR, 1933.

318. Terrorism in India, 53-54; CPR, 1933.

319. Terrorism in India, 53-54; Griffiths, 270.

320. Ibid, 271; Terrorism in India, 65.

321. Ibid, 65.

322. Griffiths, 271.

The final disappearance of terrorism from the Bengali political scene was, however, brought about by a combination of strong government measures with a belated but steady growth of public opinion against violence in the early 1930's. Beginning with a widespread condemnation³²³ of the attempt on the life of Sir Charles Tegart, Commissioner, Calcutta Police, in August, 1930, public opinion in Bengal gradually turned against terrorism. Besides the disavowal of terrorism by numerous public bodies, the Bengal legislature interrupted its normal proceedings on this occasion, and after the murder of R. R. Garlick, a District judge, in 1931 as also after two abortive attempts on the lives of Sir Stanely Jackson and Sir John Anderson. Motions condemning terrorism were passed without division on all these occasions.³²⁴

Terrorism, in fact, never did find roots among the rather apolitical rural masses of Bengal. Its votaries, as already noted, comprised exclusively younger members of the urban Hindu middle class.³²⁵ There was a sneaking sympathy³²⁶

323. There were over fifty congratulatory letters sent to Sir Charles and resolutions passed by various organisations throughout the province condemning the attack. Tegart papers MSS. Box 1, File II.

324. BLCP, 1930, XXXV, 734-33; BLCP, 1931, XXXVII, 302-303; BLCP, 1932, XXXVIII, I., 256-81.

325. RCIRC, 17, 20, 48-51; Secret Weekly Report, Intelligence Bureau, G of I., 26 September, 1929 in P&J File No. 578 of 1929, L/P&J/6/1976; Secretary, Home Department, G of I to Chief Secretary, G of B. Letter No. D. 1994/29, 24 June, 1929 and G of B. to G of I, Home Department letter No. D. 3187 P.S., 21 August, 1929, ibid. See also

for extreme political actions in the bhadrolok class in general; but a great many of them looked to terrorists rather with fear than enthusiasm. For much of the time they followed the expedient course of keeping out of the terrorists' way, or if they did at times lend them covert assistance this was largely from fear of terrorist reprisals if they denied it, at points and times when Government seemed unable to guarantee security. Of course, they quickly moved to a safe neutrality or, still better, on to the government side at the slightest indication of a firm official response³²⁷ to terrorism. As for the Bengali Muslims, they obviously had no place in a movement which had started against the background of the anti-partition agitation, particularly as it developed bonds with the cause of Hindu revivalism, as epitomised in Hindu religious rituals and symbols. Besides this, the terrorist Samitis kept Muslims out of their pale as a matter of policy.³²⁸ This is clear from a clause of the Dacca Anushilan Samitis constitution, which said, "So far as can be foreseen it is our firm belief that within a year or two the entire Mahomedan nation will become submissive to the Hindus. But if the Hindus then abandon their

Sir Basil Blackett, 'The Economics of Indian Unrest' in Foreign Affairs, 81, 1, October, 1929, 41-42.

326. FR(October(1), 1932. See also S.H.H. Mills' evidence, Joint Committee, IIc, 2028. Mills had held the office of Superintendent of Police in several Bengal districts before he became the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, an office he held till his retirement in 1932.

327. R.N.Reid, Chief Secretary, G of B. to Secretary, Home Department, G of I. Confidential letter No.319 PSD, 16 May,

firmness and national glory, and sink so low as to court friendship with the Mahomedans by being hand in glove with them, the Mahomedans will be puffed up and no good but only evil will be brought about".³²⁹ Muzaffar Ahmed, a well-known Indian Marxist leader, has reflected on this point in his memoirs, Myself and the Communist Party of India, saying 'Even if I had ever wanted to become a member of any terrorist revolutionary party, I could not have got into the Anushilan Samiti because its secret constitution prohibited in writing the admission of a non-Hindu to its membership.'³³⁰ J. C. French who, as District Magistrate, held the charge of several districts including Mymensingh, Tippera and Midnapur, the three districts worst-hit by terrorism, and a nominated member of the Central Legislative Assembly, 1929 to 1932, too, testified to the exclusively Hindu character³³¹ of the Bengali terrorist movement and even to talk amongst ^{some} terrorists of teaching the Bengali Muslims a lesson.³³²

1932. Home Department File No. 14/28 Poll of 1932, G of I. C. P. Procs., Vol. 81, Year 1932.

328. Dutt, 19; Ker, 160.

329. Ker, 160.

330. Ahmed, 11-12, 473.

331. J. C. E. IIc, 2034.

332. J. C. E. , IIc, 2034.

The long life of the terrorist movement in Bengal was clearly due more to the negative attitude of the Hindu bhadralok to a foreign government and apathy of the rural masses to politics in general than any definite pro-terrorist bias of the people of the province. The absence of any other competing political ideas till the late arrival of Gandhism and Marxism, and the conflicting political values and aspirations of an emerging Muslim bourgeoisie seemed also to have been a factor behind it. On the other hand, unidimensional anti-terrorist measures taken by the government till 1932, concentrating more on punitive and preventive actions than upon serious efforts to rouse public sentiment against terrorism, only reinforced these public attitudes and responses.³³³

A new front, however, opened in the government's campaign against terrorism after Sir John Anderson had taken over as Governor of Bengal in 1932. With the benefit of the hind-sight which he had come to possess from his handling, as Under Secretary of State, 1920-22, of much the same problem in Ireland, Sir John readily grasped the political and economic undertones of the terrorist problem in Bengal. So while upholding repressive measures as 'essential' palliatives,³³⁴ he stressed the importance of the simultaneous

333. Wheeler-Bennett, 135.

334. See Sir John's memorandum of 10 June, 1932 to King George V, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, G. V. 1154/61, quoted in Wheeler-Bennett, 129.

grant of such constitutional advance³³⁵ as would satisfy the moderate bhadrdlok, holding this to be the proper treatment of terrorism. He wanted to provide political elbow-room for the moderates to enable them to rally public support behind their anti-terrorist stand.³³⁶ He quickly saw the co-relation between terrorism and the deteriorating economic situation of the province and the resultant bhadrdlok unemployment.³³⁷ Although they did not create the terrorist problem, they were, nevertheless two powerful accessories to recruitment to terrorist ranks and to the sustaining of the campaign of violence. To rectify this, he persuaded Delhi and London to grant Bengal a statutory title, under the Government of India Act, 1935, to half the proceeds of the export duty on jute grown in Bengal, and to half the income-tax collected in the

335. Sir John Anderson to Templewood, 10 June, 1932, Templewood Collection MSS, Eur.E.240, 26. Much the same arguments were made by a civilian officer. See Baker Papers, letter No.14 of 7 January, 1932, Baker to Norah.

336. Ibid; Sir John Anderson to Templewood, 9 April, 1932. MSS. Eur. E. 240; Wheeler-Bennett, 129.

337. This point was consistently hammered home in various government reports and official correspondences. See Sedition Committee, 16; G of B to G of I, Home Department letter No.D.3187 P.S., 21 August, 1929. P&J File No.578 of 1929, L/P&J/6/1976; G of B to G of I letter No.1051 P.S.D., 8 September, 1931. Home Department File No.4147/32-Poll, Gof I, C.P.Procs., Vol.81, Year 1932, and Sir Stanely Jackson to Templewood, 27 August, 1931, Templewood Collection, 5.

province,³³⁸ both of which revenues had hitherto gone in full to the central Exchequer. Bengal was also relieved of a debt liability of eight crores of rupees to the Central Government.³³⁹ With its financial situation thus eased, the Bengal Government were able to take various economic measures to counteract terrorist overtures to impressionable youths. The government Industries and Agriculture Departments, besides providing employment opportunities to bhadralok youths, also took upon itself the task of training and rehabilitating released detenus³⁴⁰ by advancing substantial loans.³⁴¹ Several agriculture and industrial training camps were opened early in 1936 with eighty-two³⁴² trainees in them, the number of trainer-detenus having risen to one hundred and thirty-six³⁴³ towards the end of the year.

As already noted, students, particularly secondary school pupils, formed the main source of terrorist recruitment,³⁴⁴

338. Wheeler-Bennett, 148.

339. Ibid, 148.

340. Governor's speech to the Bengal Legislature, 28 August, 1935; FR August (2), 1935.

341. About two hundred and fifty thousand rupees were advanced as interest-free loans. See 'Detenus' in Sir Srinivas Sarma ed. in Builder of a Better Bengal, a souvenir-booklet brought out on the eve of Sir John Anderson's departure from Bengal.

342. FR January (1), 1936.

343. FR November (2), 1936. The increase was not, however, a steady one and fluctuated from one year to another.

344. R. C. I. R. C., 18.

although rarely³⁴⁵ within the educational institutions themselves. The government therefore took positive steps towards insulating educational institutions from terrorist infiltration by making government grants-in aid conditional upon the maintenance of discipline on the school and college campuses.³⁴⁶ Their seriousness of purpose was demonstrated when early in 1931 government grants to eighteen secondary schools in some police thanas in ^KChittagong district, one of the terrorist strongholds, were reduced by a quarter.³⁴⁷ Continued absence from schools was firmly dealt with.³⁴⁸ To keep impressionable boys and girls free of terrorist influence, they were ordered, particularly in troubled areas like Chittagong, to go to school within a radius of three miles³⁴⁹ from their normal places of residence. Steps were also taken to remove class-room boredom and general drabness on the campus which, born of formal and impersonal teacher-student relationship and the absence of adequate outlets for youthful energies, were more responsible than anything else for pupils becoming enmeshed in terrorism.³⁵⁰ Thus, following

345. J.C.E., II, 338.

346. Statesman, 25 June, 1930 and 21 November, 1930.

347. Statesman, 12 January, 1931. The order of reduction in grant was issued by J.M. Bottomley, Director of Public Instruction.

348. Statesman, 25 June, 1930.

349. FR.May (2), 1933.

350. Wheeler-Bennett, 138; BAR, 1935-36, VIII.

the practice in the British boarding schools, the 'house system' was introduced into schools in Bengal, placing small groups of students under the close supervision of house-masters while extra-curricular activities such as dramatics, elocution competitions and debates, and such energy-consuming activities as athletics, competitive games, physical education, voluntary social work and Boy Scout and Girl Guide training were emphasised.³⁵¹

Even outside the educational institutions, government officials set themselves to the task of expounding to pupils and their guardians the disastrous effects of terrorism on the society and economy of Bengal.³⁵² Numerous Committees of Public Safety³⁵³ and various other propaganda organs were set up at official behest throughout the province between 1932 and 1934 with useful results³⁵⁴ for the government. In Chittagong, one of the areas worst-hit by terrorism, Watch and Ward Committees of parents and guardians were organised, and by

351. BAR, 1935-36, VIII; Wheeler-Bennett, 138. An allocation of Rs. 1,26,000 was made for playgrounds in eighty-seven villages and for one hundred and eighty boys' and ninety-seven girls' schools. One hundred and twelve villages were provided with halls and libraries.

352. BAR, 1934-35, XXX.

353. BAR, 1932-33, XX; ibid, 1933-34, XXX-XXXI.

354. The District Magistrate of Chittagong reported 'a definite change of heart amongst the older members of the Hindu community' be it for general dislike of terrorist methods or for a realisation that terrorism was a lost case. He also told about the working of committees of guardians and parents with 'increasingly satisfactory results'. See FR(2), March, 1934.

the end of 1933, at least 20,000³⁵⁵ persons had come to be associated with these Committees, who undertook house to house visits bringing home effectively to youths and older people alike the evil effects of terrorism.³⁵⁶ Besides these the movement of bhadralok youths upto the age of twenty-five years was severely controlled by placing them under various restrictive orders under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act, 1932. All bhadralok youths residing within the municipal areas and the suburbs of Chittagong and Midnapur towns, two continuing trouble spots, were ordered for quite some time to be indoors between dusk and dawn.³⁵⁷ In Chittagong bhadralok youths were issued with identity cards³⁵⁸ of differing colours—white, green and red, indicating the degree of their suspected complicity in or exposure to terrorist activity and influence, which they were required to produce on demand.³⁵⁹ The holders of such cards could not move from Chittagong without prior written permission of the District Magistrate.³⁶⁰

355. G. of B. Police Dept. Resolution No. 4189 Pl., 1 August, 1934. Proceedings of the G. of B. Police Dept., No. 17.

356. Jyoti, 25 January, 1934; Amrita Bazar Patrika, 22 February, 1934. See Press extracts in Home Department File No. 33/2 Poll. of 1934. G of I. CP Procs. Vol. 83A, Year 1934.

357. Ghose, 87; The Times, 9 June, 1931; Statesman, 8 June 1931.

358. FR., May (2), 1933 and FR., June (1), 1933. BAR, 1934-35, XX.

359. Dastidar, 246-47; FR., June (1), 1933.

360. FR., June (2), 1933.

With all the known and potential terrorists either detained or otherwise constrained and all sources of recruitment effectively blocked, the terrorist movement had collapsed by 1936. By then the terrorist organizations had disintegrated completely, and when the detenus were released in 1937-38, they found virtually no trace of their old conspiratorial societies. The Yugantar party was hastily dissolved³⁶¹ in September, 1938 by Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, one of its senior members, as if to give it a descent burial, while the Anushilan died without a formal funeral. Meanwhile, scepticism had overtaken the terrorist camp as to the wisdom of its methods, a theme upon which many of the detained terrorists had ample leisure to reflect during their long incarceration.³⁶² They had come to realise that isolated acts of terrorism and sabotage involving a handful of youths with limited resources and without a supporting mass-base, while making dramatic headlines, could never dislodge a well-established government, which met force with superior force.³⁶³

Disillusioned and broken, a great many of the terrorists left politics altogether³⁶⁴ after their release. A few of them

361. Mukherjee, 44, 542, 603. The statement of dissolution was jointly drafted by Jadu Gopal Mukherjee and Bhupendra Kumar Dutt and appeared over the signature of the former in the weekly Forward in September, 1938. See also Gopal Haldar, 256.

362. BAR, 1935-36, IX; Nalini Das, Dwipantarar Bandi (Prisoner in the Andamans). See Preface, 2; Dastidar, 271.

363. BAR, 1935-36, IX.

364. Marcus F. Franda, Radical Politics in West Bengal, 17.

moved from one extreme to another by becoming religious recluses and starting their own āshramas.³⁶⁵ Those who still remained in politics, followed their old leaders in aligning themselves with a variety of political parties, ranging from the Indian National Congress and its various leftist offshoots, which had come into existence in the 1930's, to the Communist Party. For instance, Yugantar stalwarts like Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, Surendra Mohan Ghose,³⁶⁶ Bhuppati Majumdar,³⁶⁷ Monoranjan

365. Guha, 38. Starting from Jatindranath Mukherjee (Swāmi Nirālamba) and Aurobindo Ghose, a number of terrorists turned ascetics, e.g., Narendra Mohan Sen (Naren Maharaj, Ramkrishna Mission), Debabrata Basu (Swāmi Prajñānanda, Barisal), Akshay Kumar Dutt (Santinath), Suryya Kumar Sen (Nirbānanda, Ramkrishna Mission), Radhika Adhikāri (Swami Sundarānanda), Santi Mukherjee (Dinānanda), Priyanānda Das Gupta (Atmaprakāshananda, Ramkrishna Mission), Dinesh Das (Nikhilananda), Paresh Lahiri (Swāmi Mahādebanandagiri), Hrishikesh Kanjilal (Bishudananda), Anukul Chakrabarty (Anukul Thakur).

366. Surendra Mohan Ghose, alias Madhu Ghose (1893-), Kayasth, was the leader of the Mymensingh group of the Yugantar party. He simultaneously held the office of President of the Mymensingh District Congress Committee in 1928. In 1938, he was made President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. He was elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1946, of the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Indian Parliament, in 1957 of the West Bengal Rajya Sabha in 1962 when he also became the deputy leader of the Parliamentary Congress Party. DNB, II, 63-64.

367. Bhupati Kumar Majumdar (1890-1973), Baidya, came from Hooghly in West Bengal and was an influential member of the Yugantar party. Incarcerated in 1930, he was not released till the early 1940's. He became a minister in the West Bengal Congress ministry in the 1950's. DNB, III, 19-20.

Gupta,³⁶⁸ Bhupendra Kumar Dutt and Arun Guha,³⁶⁹ all of whom had been in close contact with the Bengal Congress leadership since the early 1920's,³⁷⁰ joined the Congress Party some even moving into positions of authority in the party. Many more ex-terrorists joined the Congress after 1947 when liberal patronage and benefices were bestowed by the Congress Government³⁷¹ in India upon those whom they called political sufferers in the cause of freedom. A few of the Yugantarites, like Amarendranath Chatterjee³⁷² and Jibanlal Chatterjee,³⁷³

368. Monoranjan Gupta (1890-), Baidya, came from Barisal and led the local Yugantar unit and also held an important position in the party hierarchy. He was detained in 1923 and once again in 1930's and was not freed till 1946. After independence he became a member of the East Pakistan legislature. In 1957, he migrated to West Bengal and later became a member of the West Bengal Assembly. DNB, II, 114-115.

369. Arun Chandra Guha (1892-) Kayasth, came from the Barisal town. He joined the Yugantar party in 1910 and became one of the leading members of the party. He was placed under detention in the 1930's, and after his release in 1938, he joined the Congress Party and helped in the reorganization of the Provincial Congress Committee which was at the time in complete disarray. In 1946, he was elected a member of the Indian Constituent Assembly; he was also a member of the Lok Sabha from 1952 to 1962, and a minister of state from 1953 to 1957.

370. It is, however, only fair to note that the All-India Congress organisation had formally dissociated itself from the terrorist movement, notwithstanding the passage of a resolution at the Karachi Congress in 1931 criticising the execution of Bhagat Singh for a bomb outrage in the Legislative Assembly. J. A. C. E. N., II, 334.

371. Franda, 17-18.

372. Amarendranath Chatterjee (1880-1957), Brahmin, came from Hooghly and was actively connected with the terrorist movement from 1907. He was imprisoned several times. He also held high office in the Congress. In 1929, he was returned to the central legislature on a Congress ticket.

aligned themselves with M. N. Roy's party which worked under the appellation of the League of Radical Congressmen from 1937 to 1940, and of the Radical Democratic Party³⁷⁴ from 1940 to 1946. By contrast, Subhas Bose's Forward Bloc, formed in 1939, attracted a far greater number of terrorists than Roy's party, probably by its militant programme and his firm stand against Gandhi and the Congress High Command.³⁷⁵ Prominent amongst those who joined the Forward Bloc were Troilokyanath Chakravarty, Rabi Sen³⁷⁶ and Sachindra Sanyal³⁷⁷ of the Anushilan Samiti,

From 1937 to 1945, he was a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly. In 1935, he joined M. M. Malariya's Congress Jatiya Dal which he left in 1945 to join M. N. Roy's Radical Democratic Party. DNB, I, 267-69.

373. Jibanlal Chatterjee (1889-1970), Brahmin, hailed from Faridpur and joined the terrorist campaign at its early stage. He was placed under preventive detention between 1916 and 1920. On his release, he temporarily worked with Muzaffar Ahmad who was then making efforts to build a Communist Party. At this stage, Chatterjee also had contact with M. N. Roy, simultaneously maintaining his Congress membership. He became the Secretary of the BPCC in 1930. After his release in 1938, following his incurecreation in the early 1930's, he joined M. N. Roy's Party. He, however, formed a new party, Democratic Vanguard Party in 1943, which later transformed into Workers Party of India. DNB, I, 274-75.
374. Shibnarayan Roy (ed.), M. N. Roy, Philosopher-Revolutionary, 69-72.
375. Franda, 13, 18.
376. Rabindra Mohan Sen (1892-1970), Kayasth, came from Jamalpur in Mymensingh district and joined the Dacca Anushilan Samiti in 1908. For a while he led the party after Pulin Das' arrest in 1910. He joined the Forward Bloc in 1939, and later formed a new party, the Socialist Party of India. DNB, IV, 118-19.
377. Sachindra Nath Sanyal, (1892-1943), Brahmin, came from Nadia, although he settled in Benares in the UP, where he founded a branch of the Anushilan Samiti in 1908, the name

Purna Das³⁷⁸ of the Madaripur Group in Faridpur district, and Anil Baran Roy³⁷⁹ and Leelabati Nag³⁸⁰ of the Dacca Shree Sangha group.

Some of the terrorists had also become disposed to Marxist and Communist ideologies. For instance, Jogesh

of which was later changed to Young Men's Association. He, however, left this party in 1923 to join the Hindustan Republican Association, in which, too, he held an important position. Sentenced to transportation for life in 1916 in the Benares Conspiracy Case, he was, however, released prematurely under the royal amnesty in 1920. He was again sentenced to a long term in jail 1926 in the Kakori Conspiracy Case, and on his release in 1937, he joined the Forward Bloc. DNB, IV, 42-43.

378. Purna Chandra Das, (1889-1956), Kayasth, joined the terrorist campaign in 1910 while a student at Bangabasi College, Calcutta, raising a party of his own, called Purna Das party or the Madaripur Group. In 1920, he joined the Bengal Congress party and in 1929 he became the Secretary of the BPCC. In 1939 he joined the Forward Bloc. After independence, he virtually retired from politics. He was stabbed to death by an ex-terrorist in May, 1956. DNB, I, 357-58.

379. Anil Baran Roy (1901-1952), Kayasth, came from Manikganj in Dacca district and was an M.A. in English, passing from Dacca University. He joined the terrorist movement during Gandhi's Non-Cooperation movement of 1921-22. In 1924, he broke away from the party and organised his own group, known as the Shree Sangha of Dacca. In 1928, he founded another organization, the Socialist Democratic Party which was, however, very short-lived. He later became converted to Marxism during his detention in 1930-38, and on his release, he joined the Forward Bloc in 1940. He died of cancer in 1952. DNB, III, 531-32.

380. Leelabati (Nag) Roy (1909-1970), daughter of a Deputy Magistrate, was a classmate of Anil Baran Roy at Dacca University while they were post-graduate students. She joined the terrorist movement during the Non-Cooperation movement. She joined the Shree Sangha in 1925 when she had already started a terrorist organization for women, the Deepqli Sangha, in Dacca, extending its activity also in Calcutta through the establishment of a boarding house for girl students, the Chatri Bhaban. She started also

Chandra Chatterjee³⁸¹ and Tridip Roy of the Anushilan party had associated themselves with some of their followers with the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) on a trial basis before they finally welded themselves in 1940 into an independent party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party³⁸² (RSP), with a distinct socialist programme. There were, however, still others who found an alternative in communism which, in organizational pattern, bore some resemblance to the old terrorist movement in Bengal in as much as it had legitimised conspiratorial and revolutionary activity, and rejected electoral politics.³⁸³ Communism seemed also to have made quite an impact on the snobbish bhadralok by its³⁸⁴ 'ideological intellectualism' which had been sadly lacking in

several girl schools in Dacca town, and edited a terrorist journal, the Jayshree. She married Anil Baran Roy, leader of the Shree Sangha and followed him in joining the Forward Bloc. DNB, III, 544-546.

381. Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee (1895-1969), Brahmin, came from Dacca, although he was connected with the Anushilan Revolutionary Party of Comilla which he joined in 1909 when he was living there. He served several terms of detention in jail between 1916 and 1926 before he was sentenced to ten years rigorous imprisonment in the Kakori Conspiracy Case in 1926. He was also a leading member of the Hindustan Republican Association. With his socialist proclivities, he maintained contact also with M. N. Roy through R. C. L. Sharma, Roy's agent in Pandicherry. In 1937, he joined the CSP and in 1940 he formed his own party RSP. In 1955, he, however, joined the Congress Party on the ticket of which he was elected to Rajya Sabha in 1956. DNB, I, 275-76.

382. Halder, 256.

383. Franda, 12.

384. Ibid, 19, 20; Pakrashi, 169. According to Pakrashi, it was 'fashion' with the terrorists in the late 1920's to

the terrorist campaign. The large scale conversion of Bengali terrorists to communism, however, did not commence till the 1930's,³⁸⁵ although some of them had already been in contact with Bengali agents of the Communist International since the early 1920's,³⁸⁶ not so much because they were enamoured of communist ideology as in the hope of moral and material support from Russia³⁸⁷ for their own campaign. Most of the early conversions took place among the gaoled terrorists³⁸⁸ in the province itself and in the Andamans³⁸⁹ through their study of communist literature which had found its way both openly and through clandestine channels.³⁹⁰ The government at this stage, having been more worried about

have handy on them a copy of Bukharin's ABC of Communism and to parrot it. This point has also been brought home by other writers focussing on the claim of intellectual superiority over the Congressmen by the communist leaders of West Bengal. See Myron Weiner, Political Change in South Asia, 188-89.

385. Government of India, India and Communism, 241; D. N. Laushey, Bengal Terrorism & The Marxist Left. Aspects of Regional Nationalism in India, 1905-1942, 100; Franda, 13; Ahmed, 12.

386. David Petrie, Communism in India, 1924-27, 2, 10, 19-20, 118-33; Gene D. Overstreet and Marshal Windmiller, Communism in India, 43; Laushey, 87, 89, 93, 94-100; Franda, 22-25; Ahmed, 90, 93, 193-97, 199-207, 240-42; 421-30.

387. Petrie, 118; Pakrashi, 151-52; Laushey, 95.

388. Ibid, 93, 100; Franda, 12; Ahmed, 12.

389. According to Pakrashi, ninety to ninety-five per cent. of the political prisoners in the Andamans became converted to communism in the late 1930's. Pakrashi, 220, 225.

390. Das, 98, 139-40, 144, 152; India and Communism, 241-42; Ahmed, 12. Laushey has discussed this point quite at length. Laushey, 97-110.

the 'technical expertise'³⁹¹ of terrorists in their pursuit of violence than with their sudden thirst³⁹² for knowledge of the communist ideology, did not exercise as rigid control on the entry of communist literature inside the jail as on literature on 'chemistry, warfare and related topics'.³⁹³ Besides this the government supplied at their own expense Marxist literature inside the jail to the under-trial prisoners of the communist conspiracy cases to prepare their defence.³⁹⁴ This literature, in turn, fell into the hands of terrorists who came to cultivate intimate relationship with the communist prisoners. The commandants of the detention camps, on the other hand, found it expedient to keep the detenus, who because of their superior social status and educational attainments³⁹⁵ to that of the camp guards presented a problem of supervision,³⁹⁶ in good humour by providing them with adequate recreational and reading facilities³⁹⁷ without imposing

391. Franda, 16-17.

392. India and Communism, 241-42.

393. Franda, 17.

394. Ibid, 17.

395. Baker Papers MSS, III, Baker to Norah, 7 May 1931.

396. Ibid, Baker to Norah, 7 May, 1931.

397. Ibid, Baker to his mother, 12 March, 1931, to Nora, 7 May, 1931 and to his father, 25 June, 1931.

tight control unless it was absolutely necessary. E. B. H. Baker, the commandant of the Hijli detention camp early in 1931 wrote to one of his relations that some of the detenus were 'budding communists', although their Marxism was confined to reading literature dealing with the Russian Revolution and the youth movement in China.³⁹⁸ This laxity on the part of the prison authorities was interpreted by the detenus as a deliberate policy of the government to encourage them to study communism as a means of diverting them from terrorism,³⁹⁹ and more detenus joined the communist study groups inside jails and detention camps. The influence of individual communists within the jail probably also counted in the conversion campaign. Satish Pakrasi attributes his conversion partly to the influence of George Allension,⁴⁰⁰ a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, in Belguam jail where the latter was also detained for entering India on a false passport.

Initially the conversion to communism was a slow process, there being only thirty-seven members of the Communist Party of India (CPI) from Bengal in 1934.⁴⁰¹

398. Baker to Norah, 7 May, 1931. *Baker Paper, MSS. III*

399. Lapshey, 191.

400. Pakrashi, 140.

401. Franda, 13, 29.

402. *Ibid*, 13, 19, 29.

The number, however, rose to over one thousand in 1942, of whom a very high percentage were former terrorists.⁴⁰² By 1947 the members of the CPI from Bengal numbered as many as twenty thousand.⁴⁰³ Prominent among them were Promode Das Gupta,⁴⁰⁴ Satish Pakrashi of the Anushilan Samiti, Ambika Chakravarty, Ganesh Ghose and Kalpana Dutt of the Chittagong Yugantar Party. But except for Das Gupta, very few of them had risen to high position in the party or had become party theoretician of any stature.

What was the character of the terrorist campaign in Bengal, which the Government had thus, with such effort, broken? In the eyes of the terrorists themselves and their

402. Franda, 13, 19, 29.

403. Ibid, 13.

404. Promode Das Gupta (1910-) Kayasth, son of a Sub-Assistant Surgeon, came from Bakerganj district. He made his political debut in 1930, while still at college, as a member of the Anushilan Samiti, ~~and~~ and spent most of the 1930's in jails and detention camps during which he joined the Communist Party. He was in charge of the CPI jail committee in Midnapur jail from 1936 to 1942 when he was released along with other communists on Russia's joining the side of the Allied Powers in World War II. Das Gupta then worked with the British and American intelligence against the Fifth columnists. He became the head of the West Bengal branch of the CPI in 1951, a position he held till 1964 when following a split in the party on ideological issues, he, along with many others, organised the Communist Party of India-Marxist, commonly called the CPI-M or CPM, and became its secretary. Franda, 15, 65-66.

sympathisers, they were an avant-garde army fired with selfless patriotism,⁴⁰⁵ an emotional response to the British tyranny. The government, on the other hand, was not prepared at first to give any political status to a campaign of violence which they had dismissed as mere banditry.⁴⁰⁶ For this reason they confined their first actions against it to prosecutions under the relevant provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code. It early became apparent, however, that the movement could not be successfully crushed under the ordinary provisions of the Criminal law and the Government was soon driven to prosecute terrorists on charges of preparing to wage war against the King under the Indian Penal Code. This partial recognition of the political nature of the terrorist campaign was followed by the appointment of a committee, popularly known as the Sedition Committee, 'to investigate Revolutionary conspiracies in India'. Although the government insisted till the last that the campaign of violence was a terrorist and anarchic campaign, the very word 'revolutionary' acknowledged that the campaign was

405. Dutt, 40; Swadhin Bharat, a terrorist leaflet, I. O. L. (P. P. Ben F. 12); Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Desh Basir Prati Nibedan (An appeal to my country-men), another terrorist pamphlet, I. O. L., 6-7; Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, 429, 594.

406. Sir Percival Griffiths tells us that initially the police 'copied the pattern set by Sleeman and others in the old Thagi and Dakaiti Department' in dealing with the terrorists. Griffiths, 236.

politically inspired. The non-official European Community, some members of which had also ^{become} the target of terrorist attack in the 1930's, not only supported the official view but at times expressed much stronger feelings against the 'menace of anarchism'.⁴⁰⁷ The European Association, for instance, in 1930 passed a resolution advocating postponement of further constitutional advance till the terrorist movement and all seditious propaganda had been firmly dealt with.⁴⁰⁸ Some members of the Association even talked of going back to the Morley-Minto reforms as a step, what they called, of 'advance by retrogression'.⁴⁰⁹ The Darjeeling branch of the European Association demanded of the government in November, 1931, that it should provide for summary trial and execution within twenty-four hours of all persons accused of attempted murder for political reasons.⁴¹⁰ It also called upon the government for 'immediate deportation' overseas of any person instigating, inciting or encouraging political murders.⁴¹¹ In

407. Resolution passed in a meeting of the European Association, Calcutta on 13 November, 1931. Statesman, 14 November, 1931.

408. Resolution passed in a meeting of the European Association at Calcutta on 27 August, 1930. Statesman, 28 August, 1930. A similar resolution was passed by the Western Bengal branch of the European Association on 21 September, 1931. Statesman, 24 September, 1931.

409. G. N. Andrews, presiding over a meeting of the Calcutta Europeans on 18 August, 1930 made this proposition. Statesman, 19 August, 1930.

410. Statesman, 3 November, 1931.

411. Ibid.

the same month, speaking at meeting of the Assansol branch of the European Association, E. Villiers, President of the central European Association talked of ending 'this dirty business of anarchism',⁴¹² by an organised and concerted movement. There were some amongst both official and non-official Britons who though critical of the terrorist movement looked at it with considerable understanding and composure. For instance, E. H. Baker, a commandant of one detention camp pointed out to one of his sisters that the terrorist campaign was a part of the nationalist movement.⁴¹³ Sir Percival Griffiths, who was a District Magistrate⁴¹⁴ in Bengal in the 1930's places on record in his recently published work, To Guard My People, that many regarded the Bengali terrorists as 'genuine, though misguided, patriots'.⁴¹⁵ Page, a non-official Briton, on the other hand, in his deposition before the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform in 1933 stated that he did not know how far the campaign of violence in Bengal was an anarchical movement.⁴¹⁶

412. Statesman, 25 November, 1931.

413. Baker Papers, III, CSAS, Letter to Norah (sister?) 7 January, 1932.

414. He also held the charge of Midnapur district, then a terrorist stronghold, after three successive District Magistrates there had already fallen victim to the terrorist gun.

415. Griffiths, 232.

416. J.C.E. II A, 482

The terrorists for their part entered an emphatic protest through their clandestinely-produced leaflets⁴¹⁷ and through formal representations to the government⁴¹⁸ against their being called terrorists, still worse, anarchists. Their stand with regard to violence was that it was used as a counter to 'official terrorism',⁴¹⁹ a rationalisation shared also by public men such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore. Nehru saw the situation as the 'nationalist-fascism' facing the 'imperial-fascism',⁴²⁰ and Tagore, while disapproving the excesses of both the nationalists and the government, blamed official repressions for the persistent growth of political violence.⁴²¹ This seemed also to be the attitude of the bhadraqlok

417. See Swādhin Bhārat leaflets, IOL Proscribed Publications, pp. Ben. F.11 (circa. 1917) and pp. Ben. F.12 (1932). See also Deshbāsir Prati Nibedan, an eight-paged pamphlet issued probably in late 1924 over the signature of Sachindranath Sanyal, a leading member of the Hindustan Republican Association, IOL; 'The Revolutionary', another pamphlet issued in 1925 over the signature of Bejay Kumar President, Central Council, The Revolutionary Party of India, whom the police identified as Sachindranath Sanyal, also categorically denied that the perpetrators of violence were terrorists or anarchists. For the full text of the pamphlet, see Terrorism in India, 190-201.

418. Mukherjee, 417, 429, 594. According to Mukherjee, one protest letter was sent to the Bengal Government by Bhupendra Kumar Dutt and Monoranjan Gupta from within the jail.

419. See 'The Revolutinnary' pamphlet, Terrorism in India, 194.

420. Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, 315.

421. Rabindranath Tagore, Kalantar, see also Tagore's protest letter of 7 September, 1917, following the internment of Annie Besant, Probhat Kumar Mukhapadhyaya, Rabindra Jibani, II, 461-62.

in general, for, a Sub Deputy Magistrate of Bakerganj, commenting on the subject, recorded that the bhadralok generally believed that 'repressive measures have made the revolutionaries desperate',⁴²² and that if they loathed 'dastardly' terrorist action, they were equally moved by the news of terrorists' taking their own lives or going to the gallows 'for no selfish end of their own'.⁴²³ Here it may be of interest to consider whether a more adequate model can be found than is expressed in these diametrically opposing views.

If the ultimate ends of terrorism were political, how were they expected to be achieved? The Bengali terrorists were not oblivious of the fact that 'political murder' would not of itself bring them 'independence',⁴²⁴ their ultimate object. This, they knew, could not be attained by anything short of a successful armed insurrection. This was clearly stated by Barindra Kumar Ghose in his confessional statement⁴²⁵ in 1909. For this reason, one group of Bengali terrorists entered into a conspiracy⁴²⁶ with Germany during World War I, and nearly succeeded in landing arms in quantities

422. FR., October (1), 1932.

423. Ibid.

424. R. C. I. R. C., 17; Swadhin Bharat, IOL, pp. Ben. F.11 and pp. Ben. F.12.

425. Kenrick Collection, IOL MSS. Eur. D.709. Confession. See Confessional Statement of Barindra Kumar Ghose before L. Birley, Magistrate, 3-4.

426. Mukherjee, 33-31, 385-86; R. C. I. R. C., 51-54.

which would have made possible a major campaign against the government. But after this abortive attempt there was only one other major effort, the solitary instance of the successful raid on government armouries in Chittagong in 1930, and the subsequent unequal armed confrontation between a small band of terrorists and the government forces in the Jalalabad hills. Thereafter the Bengali terrorists bogged down in the morass of individual terrorism.

Given the failure of the two large-scale plans, how did the terrorists justify to themselves and to the public their isolated acts of individual terrorism, whether they took the form of robbery or murder? To begin with, it must be noted that some of the terrorists, like Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, had strong reservations⁴²⁷ about dacoity and isolated murder, although others seem to have stressed their value as acts of propaganda⁴²⁸ which greatly aided in the recruitment of new members. Even so they could not but be aware of the adverse effects⁴²⁹ of dacoities on the public in general and their victims in particular. They, therefore, rationalised their motives in committing such crimes as the unavoidable means of raising funds⁴³⁰ for a movement pledged to the service of

427. Mukherjee, 27, 285, 425-26; Haldar, 226.

428. Dutt, 23-24; Mukherjee, 283.

429. Guha, 84; Mukherjee, 282.

430. In a leaflet, the terrorists explained that they had resorted to dacoity because they had no other means for raising funds. They called upon the rich in the country to contribute to the terrorist fund thus enabling them to stop robbery. Swadhin Bharat pp. Ben. F.10 (I. O. L) See also Swadhin Bharat (circa 1917), IOL pp. Ben F.11.

the 'mother land'; which enjoined both a moral and religious duty on her children. In the beginning, probably partly in deference to the bhadrqlok dislike for personal violence and partly to impress upon the victims the noble intention behind dacoity, the terrorists sometimes issued receipts⁴³¹ for amounts seized by violence telling the victims that they had taken the money as a 'loan' for their fund, and that the amount would be repaid with interest in due time.⁴³² But there is no evidence to suggest that the terrorists had any real anxiety about repayment⁴³³ of loans in such one-sided transactions. Nor was the money so procured always spent upon the movement proper. Some terrorists thought of robbing government treasuries⁴³⁴ rather than the public but this never materialised, although mail robberies were on the increase in the 1920's and the 1930's. Dacoities and murders thus, as Bhupendranath Dutt pointed out, provided more the stuff of *criminal* melodrama,⁴³⁵ than of revolution itself. Certainly it is tempting to see the continuance of isolated acts of terrorism as an expression of individual psychological needs to live dangerously and spectacularly rather than of any considered political programme.

431. Sedition Committee reproduced one such receipt in their report. See R. C. I. R. C., 36.

432. Ibid, 36.

433. Guha, 89.

434. Ibid, 89. The terrorists also tried to replenish their coffer with counterfeit money. Ibid, 87-88.

435. Dutt, 23.

The Bengali terrorists lacked any definite political philosophy,⁴³⁶ nor had they any clear-cut idea of a substitute government in the event of a successful overthrow of British rule in India. In the beginning they could not think of anything better than a Hindu kingship⁴³⁷ as a replacement, although in 1925, the Hindustan Republican Association, later renamed as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, declared that the establishment of a 'Federal Republic of the United States of India',⁴³⁸ on the lines of the government in the USA was its ultimate object. The main centres of activity of this party were however, the U.P. and the Punjab rather than Bengal. In fact, the Bengali terrorists, with their vague and abstract ideas of political institutions and inadequate knowledge of various European movements, alternated between these models without a firm belief in any. It must, however, be said that although the terrorist movement failed to manifest itself as little more than an emotional and thoughtless patriotism, it had, nevertheless, a definite role as a pressure group and in the radicalisation of the Congress' programme, demonstrated in the shift in the latter's political goal from self-government to complete independence late in 1929.

436. Guha, 78; Pakrashi, 135; Das, preface, I; Dutt, 17.

437. Dutt, 36. Dutt tells that even Aurobindo favoured the idea of Kingship; Pakrashi informs us that they talked of offering the 'throne' of India to a native prince towards the establishment of Ram Rajya, Pakrashi, 135.

438. 'The Revolutionary', Terrorism in India, 192, 196.

CONCLUSION

This survey has sought to present a picture of Bengal society and politics during the last decade under the Government of India Act of 1919, but it is a confused and fragmented picture which emerges. Bengal responded only fitfully and often negatively to all-Indian political movements. Indian Muslims had no effective national organization during these years. Bengali Muslims, soured by the absence of support for their protest against the annulment of Partition in 1912, responded minimally to the Khilafat-Non-Co-operation movement of 1921-22, only the Pan-Islamists of Calcutta offered their support, while rural East Bengal, to which many Muslim leaders withdrew, remained quite inactive. (Fazlul Huq was expelled from the Presidency Muslim League, then a stronghold of the Pro-Congress Muslims in Calcutta for his opposition to Non-Co-operation movement). The Muslim League split also over the response to be made to the Simon Commission. In Bengal a handful of pro-Congress Muslims gave token support to the Jinnah League which was ready to co-operate with Congress in boycotting the Commission and in jointly drafting a constitution for India. (Even this support was short-lived.) The traditional Bengali Muslim leaders, however, supported the Shafi League which was for co-operating with the Simon Commission. (This too was a co-operation of limited significance and did not mean that a strong Bengali element had committed itself to national Muslim action.)

Similarly the Hindu elite in Bengal was pulling away from the national leadership. Warned by its experience of agitational politics in the anti-partition agitation of 1905-11, it was unwilling to throw

itself into the Non-Co-operation movement of 1921-22, with its dangers of popular violence escaping out of their control. C.R. Das successfully opposed Gandhi. His Swarajya Party entered the councils countering Gandhi's anti-Council policy to wreck both the government reforms and Gandhi's plans from within. After Das' death it was Subhas Bose's turn to oppose official Congress policy, this time by attacking the Congress commitment to Dominion Status as its goal. And when Gandhi launched his Civil Disobedience movement he could extract only a nominal adherence to it in Bengal, where Congress leaders joined it less than half-heartedly, the BPCC discharging its obligation to the national organization by the appointment of an inactive Committee which was to be superseded by another chosen from Gandhi's personal followers in the province. In the interests of a national strategy, Gandhi concluded the Poona Pact with the Depressed Classes, designed to keep them within the Congress fold. What the Bengal Congress leaders noted was that it was the Bhadralok class which was to pay the price - the loss to the Depressed Classes of a quarter of the Hindu (general) seats.*

If no clear pattern was imposed on Bengal politics by national leaders, Hindu or Muslim, little more was achieved within Bengal by the provincial party leaders. The most obvious feature of Congress politics in this period was the bitter struggle between J.M. Sen Gupta and Subhas Chandra Bose and their respective followers and allies. This was in part a regional conflict of East against West Bengal

* One Bengali response was to withdraw into the provincial shell, as when the Bengal Legislative Council carried a resolution urging Government to appoint only Bengalis to posts in Bengal.

Hindus - when Akhil Chandra Dutt was appointed chairman of the BPCC in 1927 there were bitter protests that he was the third easterner in succession to hold the chair, his predecessors having been C.R. Das and J.M. Sen Gupta. This might have been a rural-urban division too, since the two leaders had their bases in Chittagong and Calcutta respectively, but there was little sign of this in the policies of the two men, both of whom made the capture of the Calcutta corporation a central theme of their campaigns. (Sen Gupta, with his English wife, was very much a city man, while it was Bose who through his links with terrorist groups was in touch with East Bengal.) It was typical of the depth of the divisions in the Congress ranks that in 1930-31 the two faction heads each produced a Civil Disobedience committee, Bose and his followers having been taunted with their poor tally of martyrdoms in the cause. It was the conflict with Sen Gupta over elections to the BPCC and the attempt by the Congress Working Committee to impose arbitration by Sitaramayya in 1929 and by M.S. Aney in 1931, both of them Gandhians, which made Bose so determined an opponent of Gandhi that Bose called Gandhi a "useless piece of furniture" when Gandhi had finally called off Civil disobedience in 1933.

It was into this factional pattern that student and terrorist movements were fitted, the conflict between Bose and Sen Gupta reflected in the creation of two rival student organizations - the Bengal Presidency Students Association and the All Bengal Students Association, and in their links with two rival terrorist organizations, the Yugantar and the Anushilan. The Congress factionalism took its heavy

toll on the student movement. In 1931 J.M. Sen Gupta was prevented from presiding over an ABSA district students' conference at Mymensingh by the threat of physical violence on him by the local BPSA faction. In retaliation the local ABSA supporters detained, although for a very short time, one of Bose's supports, Purna Chandra Das, a terrorist leader, who was invited by the BPSA faction to preside over a rival conference a few miles away from Mymensingh. The ABSA and the BPSA dominated student movement had very pronounced political overtones, although none of the leaders of these two organizations seemed to have had any success in politics in the later years at all. The terrorist movement in Bengal was largely the story of rivalry between the Yugantar and the Anushilan parties. While the patriotism of the Bengali terrorists was second to none, the movement itself remained socially isolated.

The rifts and conflicts which were so marked a feature of the Congress political scene in Bengal, were at times dignified with a colouring of principle or ideology, as in Bose's stance as a Socialist. On the whole, however, Muslim politics in Bengal dispensed with the need for any check to the factional struggle for power. That struggle was little-influenced by any regional-national considerations for there was no continuously effective Muslim national organization to impose any pattern upon provincial politics. What thread there was running through this period was a social one - the alliance of the older strand of an Urdu cultural upper class Muslim leadership in Bengal with Muslim leaders from other parts of India, Ghuznavi or Nawab Ali Chaudhuri may be taken as examples, and the emergence of a newer generation of middle-class men, of whom Fazlul Huq, Suhrawardy and

Azizul Huq might be seen as representatives. But such distinctions were overlaid by purely personal ambitions, expressed in constantly shifting alliances, and the search for position and patronage, and by the attractions and repulsions of family or kinship connections within the leadership. It was this unstable personal rivalry which denied to Muslims the fruits of their voting strength in the Assembly in these years. The one unifying element in Muslim politics - most marked as the constitutional changes of 1935 approached - was a common determination to hold on to, or to extend, the communal safeguards which they enjoyed. In 1927 Mujibar Rahman, Secretary of the Presidency Muslim League and an active member of the Congress Party, might urge communal harmony but still felt obliged categorically to declare that separate electorates was the "corner stone" of Muslim politics. The Muslim leaders of all shades and opinions thus had the interest of their community uppermost in their heart, although by their personal ambitions and faction fights they threw away many opportunities that came their way to secure benefits for their community.

The inter-communal rivalry which was again the result of mutual fear and distrust accentuated each time there was a prospect of fresh constitutional advance. In the beginning of the 1930's, there was a growing realization among many leaders of both the communities that the question of electorate¹ was over-emphasised and over-stated by both sides. Many Muslims would then see no harm in accepting joint electorates with reservation of seats on the population basis. But once again, factionalism within communal politics prevented a broad-based communal understanding.

Appendix I

Draft Constitution of the Proposed All-Bengal Students'
Association

(To be submitted in the open Conference.)

(Drawn up by the Students' Organising Committee, Calcutta.)

1. Name and Style.

The Association shall bear the name and style of
"All-Bengal Students' Association."

2. Aim and Object.

The aim and object of the Association will be to
organise the students of Bengal into a compact body with a
view to—

- (a) develop corporate life amongst them,
- (b) create a cultural atmosphere by encouraging physical,
intellectual and moral education on sound lines,
- (c) enable the students to be in touch with the cultural
movements at home and abroad,
- (d) co-ordinate the activities of students for the
welfare of the country,
- (e) safeguard the interests of the student community.

3. Membership.

Every student of Bengal is eligible for membership
of the Association, provided—

- (a) he or she has completed the fourteenth year,

(b) he or she pays an annual subscription of annas
four only,

(c) he or she accepts the creed of the Association.

4. Organisation.

I. —Central Council of the All-Bengal Students' Association.

(a) The Association will have a Central Council which will be formed by taking representatives from every district in Bengal.

(b) District Associations with members up to the number 300 will be entitled to send 2 representatives, with members whose number is from 300 to 500, 500 to 700 and 700 up will send 3, 4 and 6 representatives respectively.

N. B. —By districts are meant—

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Burdwan. | 13. Dinajpur. |
| 2. Birbhum. | 14. Jalpaiguri. |
| 3. Bankura. | 15. Darjeeling. |
| 4. Midnapur. | 16. Rangpur. |
| 5. Hooghly. | 17. Bogra. |
| 6. Howrah. | 18. Pabna. |
| 7. 24-Parganas. | 19. Malda. |
| 8. Nadia. | 20. Dacca. |
| 9. Murshidabad. | 21. Mymensingh. |
| 10. Jessore. | 22. Faridpur. |
| 11. Khulna. | 23. Barisal. |
| 12. Rajshahi. | 24. Tippera. |

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 25. Noakhali. | 30. North Calcutta. |
| 26. Chittagong. | 31. East Central Calcutta. |
| 27. Sylhet. | 32. West Central Calcutta. |
| 28. Cachar. | 33. South Calcutta. |
| 29. Manbhum. | |

(c) The Central Council will elect the following office-bearers from amongst its members at its first general meeting:-

- (1) President.
- (2) Two Vice-Presidents.
- (3) One Secretary.
- (4) Assistant Secretaries.
- (5) One Treasurer.

N. B. —All the office-bearers will be honorary.

(d) The Central Council will appoint its working committee at its first general meeting.

(e) The Council will hold at least three meetings annually.

(f) One-fourth the total number of members will form a quorum at any Council meeting.

(g) The Secretary of the Council shall, within 15 days of receipt of a requisition stating the business to be transacted and signed by at least 20 members, call a meeting of the Central Council. If the Secretary fails to call the meeting required by the requisition, the requisitionists may themselves convene the meeting.

(h) For all the meetings of the Central Council (except emergent meetings) at least 15 days' previous notice shall be given.

(i) It will appoint sub-committees at any meeting to be in charge of special functions. Members of the sub-committees will not necessarily be members of the Council.

(j) At every meeting of the Council, it will discuss and accept the reports of the working committee and the sub-committee.

(k) The Council will make bye-laws and execute decrees according to exigencies of circumstances.

(l) It will draw up a general outline of the programme of work according to the mandate of the annual conference.

II. — Working Committee of the Council.

(a) The Working Committee will consist of—

(1) President of the Central Council, ex-officio

President of the Working Committee.

(2) Secretary of the Central Council, ex-officio

Secretary of the Working Committee.

(3) Nineteen members to be elected by the Central

Council at its first general meeting.

(b) The Working Committee will carry out in detail the general programme drawn up by the Central Council.

(c) It will make arrangement for annual elections of the Council.

(d) It will organise and affiliate District Associations and will settle internal disputes in District Associations.

The question of disaffiliation will be investigated into by the Working Committee and reported to the Central Council for necessary action.

(e) Seven members will form a quorum at any meeting of the Working Committee.

(f) The Secretary shall, within a week of the receipt of a requisition stating the business to be transacted and signed by at least 10 members, convene a meeting of the Working Committee. If the Secretary fails to call the meeting required by the requisition, the requisitionists may themselves call the meeting.

(g) The Secretary may call a meeting of the Working Committee at any time.

(h) Three days' previous notice and the agenda of business must be given to convene a meeting of the Working Committee.

(i) This Committee will submit reports of its activities to the Central Council at its meetings.

III. —Enlistment of Members.

District Associations will enlist members for All-Bengal Students' Association from amongst students of institutions belonging to their respective districts.

IV. —District Associations.

(a) Every member of the All-Bengal Students' Association will automatically become a member of the District Association of the particular district in which the institution to which he belongs is situated.

(b) The management of District Associations will be after the lines and principles of the management of the Central Associations.

(c) District Associations will organise and affiliate local students' unions.

(d) They will organise District Students' Conference.

(e) The District Unions will, by rotation, take upon themselves the task of holding the annual session of the All-Bengal Students' Conference.

(f) They are to send reports of their activities to the Working Committee of the All-Bengal Students' Association every two months.

V. —Finances.

(1) The source of income of the All-Bengal Students' Association will be—

(a) General membership fee (for membership of the All-Bengal Students' Association), annas 4 per head annually.

(b) Central Council membership fee, Re. 1 per head annually.

(c) Affiliation fee (from District Associations—Rs. 2 per head association annually).

(d) Donations.

(2) Allotment of income—

1. The membership fees for the Association will be realised by the District Associations which will be entitled to three-fourths and contribute one-fourth of the sum realised to the central body.

2. Incomes under heads V(b) and V(c) will be reserved entirely by the central body.

3. District Associations will have complete enjoyment of whatever donations they raise individually.

4. A set of election rules will be drawn up and appended to the constitution later on.

All possible suggestions and amendments for the improvement of the draft constitution are invited and should be sent to the undersigned on or before the 25th June 1928.

(Sd.) Birendra Nath Das Gupta,
Secretary, Students' Organising Committee.

93/1/K, Baitakhana Road,
Chattra Office, Calcutta.

A. (i) Ordinances & Government of India Acts, 1907-1926

to deal with terrorism in Bengal.

1. The Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act (India Act, VI), 1907.
2. The Explosive Substances Act (India Act, VI), 1908.
3. The Newspapers (Incitement to Offence) Act (India Act VII), 1908.
4. The Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act (India Act XIV), 1908.
5. The Indian Press Act (India Act I), 1910.
6. The Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act (India Act XI), 1919.
7. The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act (India Act XXII), 1922.
(This Act lapsed without coming into effect)
8. The Police (Incitement to Disaffection) Act (India Act XXII), 1922.
9. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance, 1924.
10. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment (Supplementary) Act, 1925.

A. (ii) Ordinances & Government of India Act, 1927-1936.

1. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance (Ordinance I), 1930.
2. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance (Ordinance II), 1930.
3. The Unauthorised News-sheets and News-Papers Ordinance (Ordinance VII), 1930.
4. The India Press (Emergency Powers) Act (India Act, XXIII), 1931.
5. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance (Ordinance IX), 1931.
6. The Bengal Emergency Powers Ordinance (Ordinance XI), 1931.

7. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment (Supplementary) Act (India Act VIII), 1932.
8. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act (India Act XXIII), 1932.
9. The Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act (India Act XXIV), 1932.

B. Government of Bengal Acts, 1925-1936.

1. The Bengal Criminal Law Act, 1925.
2. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment (Part Continuance) Act, 1930.
3. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act (Bengal Act VI), 1930.
4. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act (Bengal Act IV), 1932.
5. The Bengal Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act (Bengal Act XIII), 1932.
6. The Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act (Bengal Act XII), 1932.
7. The Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages (Amendment) Act (Bengal Act XIX), 1932.
8. The Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act (Bengal Act XXI V), 1934.
9. The Bengal Public Security Act (Bengal Act XXII), 1932.
10. The Bengal Smuggling of Arms Act (Bengal Act VI), 1934.
11. The Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act (Bengal Act VII), 1934.
12. The Bengal Public Security (Extending) Act (Bengal Act XVIII), 1935.

Terrorist crimes in the district of Dacca,
Chittagong and Rajshashi Divisions, 1906-1926.¹

| <u>Division/ District</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Dacoity/ robbery</u> | <u>Murder associated with dacoity/ robbery</u> | <u>Assassi- nations</u> | <u>Others² including attempted outrages</u> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| <u>DACCA</u> | | | | | |
| <u>DIVISION</u> | | | | | |
| Dacca | 1907 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1908 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| | 1909 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1910 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1911 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| | 1912 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 1913 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1914 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1915 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1916 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| | 1917 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1918 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| | | 17 | 6 | 12 | 7 |
| Mymensingh | 1908 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1910 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1911 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1913 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1914 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1915 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| | 1916 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1917 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1918 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | 1919 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1922 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | | 20 | 8 | 9 | 6 |

1. Sources: J. C. Ker, Political Trouble in India, 1907-1917, 446-481; BPR, 1930 to 1936; SCR, 36-90; JCR, II, ; Terrorism in India, 1917-1936, 136-181.

Note: (i) no terrorist crime was reported for the year and in the district not mentioned in the table; (ii) 0 indicates no crime in particular category for that year.

2. Others include mail bag snatching, bomb-throwing etc.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------------------|------|----|---|---|---|
| <u>F</u> | | | | | |
| Faridpur | 1907 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1908 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1909 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1910 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1911 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1913 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1914 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | 1915 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | 1916 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1917 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 7 | 0 | 1 | 9 |
| Bakerganj | 1908 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1910 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1911 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1912 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1915 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1917 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1925 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 8 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| <u>CHITTAGONG</u> | | | | | |
| <u>DIVISION</u> | | | | | |
| Chittagong | 1912 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1914 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1923 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1924 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| Noakhali | 1911 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1912 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1918 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Tippera | 1909 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1911 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1912 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1913 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1914 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1915 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| | 1916 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1917 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1918 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | | 16 | 8 | 3 | 5 |

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-----------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <u>RAJSHAHI</u> | | | | | | | |
| <u>DIVISION</u> | | | | | | | |
| Rajshahi | 1915 | 1 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| | 1917 | 1 | | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | | 2 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| Rangpur | 1911 | 1 | | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | 1915 | 1 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| | 1917 | 1 | | 2 | | 0 | 0 |
| | | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | 0 |
| Bogra | 1918 | 0 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| Pabna | 1916 | 1 | | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | 1917 | 0 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| | | 1 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| <u>BURDWAN</u> | | | | | | | |
| <u>DIVISION</u> | | | | | | | |
| Burdwan | 1913 | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 1 |
| | 1924 | 1 | | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | | 1 | | 0 | | 0 | 1 |
| Bankura | 1907 | 0 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| Midnapur | 1907 | 0 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| | 1912 | 0 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| | 1913 | 0 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| | | 0 | | 0 | | 3 | 0 |
| Hooghly | 1908 | 2 | | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | 1909 | 1 | | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | 1913 | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 1 |
| | 1914 | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | 1 |
| | | 3 | | 0 | | 0 | 2 |
| Howrah | 1908 | 1 | | 0 | | 1 | 0 |
| | 1916 | 2 | | 0 | | 0 | 3 |
| | 1923 | 1 | | 2 | | 0 | 0 |
| | | 4 | | 2 | | 1 | 3 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

PRESIDENCY
DIVISION

| | | | | | |
|-------------|------|---|---|---|---|
| 24-Parganas | 1908 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| | 1909 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1913 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1914 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1915 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1925 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1926 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | | 7 | 0 | 3 | 8 |

| | | | | | |
|----------|------|----|---|----|----|
| Calcutta | 1908 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | 1909 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1910 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1911 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 1913 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1914 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| | 1915 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| | 1916 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| | 1917 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1923 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1924 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| | 1925 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 12 | 5 | 17 | 10 |

| | | | | | |
|-------|------|---|---|---|---|
| Nadia | 1908 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1909 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1915 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |

Terrorist crimes in the districts of Dacca, Chittagong
and Rajshahi Divisions and in Sylhet district of Assam,
1927-36.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-----------------|------|----|---|---|----|
| <u>DACCA</u> | | | | | |
| <u>DIVISION</u> | | | | | |
| Dacca | 1930 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1931 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1932 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| | 1933 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1934 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| | 1935 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 1936 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | | 24 | 0 | 7 | 12 |
| Mymensingh | 1929 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1930 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| | 1931 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1932 | 17 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1934 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1936 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 41 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Faridpur | 1928 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1929 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1930 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1931 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1932 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| | 1935 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| | | 16 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| Bakerganj | 1928 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1929 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1930 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1931 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| | 1932 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1934 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 11 | 1 | 1 | 7 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------------------|------|----|---|----|---|
| <u>CHITTAGONG</u> | | | | | |
| <u>DIVISION</u> | | | | | |
| Chittagong | 1930 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 2 |
| | 1931 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 1932 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | 1933 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1934 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | | 2 | 1 | 10 | 7 |
| Noakhali | 1930 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1932 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1935 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Tippera | 1930 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 1931 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1932 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | 1933 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1934 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 10 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| <u>RAJSHAHI</u> | | | | | |
| <u>DIVISION</u> | | | | | |
| Rajshahi | 1929 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1930 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1931 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1932 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1933 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 7 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Rangpur | 1930 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1932 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1933 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1935 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1936 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Dinajpur | 1931 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1934 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1935 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--------|------|----|---|---|---|
| Bogra | 1931 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| | 1934 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1935 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 11 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Sylhet | 1931 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| | 1934 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1935 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 11 | 2 | 0 | 4 |

Terrorist crimes in the districts of Burdwan and
Presidency Divisions, 1927-36.

BURDWAN
DIVISION

| | | | | | |
|----------|------|---|---|---|---|
| Burdwan | 1931 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 1932 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Birbhum | 1932 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1934 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Bankura | 1932 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Midnapur | 1931 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1932 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Hooghly | 1927 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1931 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1932 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--------|------|---|---|---|---|
| Howrah | 1930 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1932 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | 1933 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1934 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

PRESIDENCY
DIVISION

| | | | | | |
|-------------|------|---|---|---|---|
| 24-Parganas | 1931 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
|-------------|------|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|----------|------|---|---|---|----|
| Calcutta | 1930 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | 1931 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | 1932 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| | 1933 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | | 6 | 2 | 3 | 11 |

| | | | | | |
|-------|------|---|---|---|---|
| Nadia | 1931 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| | 1932 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|------------------|------|---|---|---|---|
| Murshid- abad | 1932 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
|------------------|------|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|--------|------|---|---|---|---|
| Khulna | 1930 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1931 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1933 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

| | | | | | |
|---------|------|---|---|---|---|
| Jessore | 1932 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1933 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 1935 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Incidents of crimes in the districts of Dacca, Chittagong
and Rajshahi Divisions, 1927 - 35¹

| <u>Divisions/Districts</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Dacoity/ Robbery</u> | <u>Murder and culpable homicide</u> | <u>Riot² (co- mmunal, political & otherwise</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <u>DACCA DIVISION</u> | | | | |
| Dacca | 1927 | 36 | 50 | 39 |
| | 1928 | 34 | 52 | 51 |
| | 1929 | 38 | 57 | 51 |
| | 1930 | 94 | 75 | 222 |
| | 1931 | 181 | 62 | 100 |
| | 1932 | 192 | 66 | 84 |
| | 1933 | 164 | 63 | 59 |
| | 1934 | 114 | 60 | 61 |
| | 1935 | 99 | 74 | 46 |
| | | <u>952</u> | <u>559</u> | <u>713</u> |
| Mymensingh | 1927 | 75 | 108 | 85 |
| | 1928 | 43 | 100 | 87 |
| | 1929 | 57 | 109 | 106 |
| | 1930 | 100 | 143 | 305 |
| | 1931 | 159 | 164 | 134 |
| | 1932 | 158 | 157 | 126 |
| | 1933 | 67 | 163 | 95 |
| | 1934 | 59 | 129 | 71 |
| | 1935 | 50 | 121 | 68 |
| | | <u>768</u> | <u>1194</u> | <u>1087</u> |
| Faridpur | 1927 | 22 | 229 | 38 |
| | 1928 | 13 | 27 | 39 |
| | 1929 | 12 | 26 | 36 |
| | 1930 | 25 | 32 | 91 |
| | 1931 | 49 | 28 | 53 |
| | 1932 | 70 | 47 | 36 |
| | 1933 | 65 | 32 | 38 |
| | 1934 | 98 | 32 | 35 |
| | 1935 | 62 | 32 | 49 |
| | | <u>416</u> | <u>285</u> | <u>415</u> |

1. Source: BPR, 1927 to 1936.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Bakerganj | 1927 | 35 | 76 | 78 |
| | 1928 | 55 | 90 | 75 |
| | 1929 | 49 | 77 | 94 |
| | 1930 | 67 | 70 | 133 |
| | 1931 | 107 | 81 | 67 |
| | 1932 | 136 | 111 | 94 |
| | 1933 | 87 | 82 | 56 |
| | 1934 | 110 | 98 | 68 |
| | 1935 | 82 | 66 | 83 |
| | | 728 | 751 | 748 |

CHITTAGONG DIVISION

| | | | | |
|------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Chittagong | 1927 | 21 | 13 | 34 |
| | 1938 | 23 | 12 | 24 |
| | 1929 | 13 | 9 | 25 |
| | 1930 | 25 | 15 | 29 |
| | 1931 | 66 | 19 | 292 |
| | 1932 | 103 | 27 | 27 |
| | 1933 | 69 | 28 | 14 |
| | 1934 | 44 | 20 | 15 |
| | 1935 | 70 | 16 | 25 |
| | | 434 | 159 | 485 |
| Noakhali | 1927 | 3 | 13 | 17 |
| | 1928 | 4 | 14 | 17 |
| | 1929 | 10 | 12 | 17 |
| | 1930 | 6 | 10 | 26 |
| | 1931 | 6 | 8 | 18 |
| | 1932 | 14 | 20 | 30 |
| | 1933 | 19 | 20 | 28 |
| | 1934 | 24 | 14 | 20 |
| | 1935 | 24 | 14 | 19 |
| | | 110 | 125 | 192 |
| Tippera | 1927 | 19 | 39 | 64 |
| | 1928 | 22 | 28 | 46 |
| | 1929 | 18 | 28 | 43 |
| | 1930 | 38 | 35 | 73 |
| | 1931 | 68 | 41 | 44 |
| | 1932 | 66 | 41 | 47 |
| | 1933 | 45 | 30 | 38 |
| | 1934 | 20 | 30 | 37 |
| | 1935 | 25 | 39 | 57 |
| | | 321 | 311 | 449 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| <u>RAJSHAHI DIVISION</u> | | | | |
| Rajshahi | 1927 | 29 | 20 | 3 |
| | 1928 | 34 | 17 | 9 |
| | 1929 | 22 | 22 | 20 |
| | 1930 | 41 | 44 | 17 |
| | 1931 | 91 | 29 | 11 |
| | 1932 | 78 | 21 | 25 |
| | 1933 | 66 | 18 | 12 |
| | 1934 | 71 | 24 | 6 |
| | 1935 | 59 | 27 | 10 |
| | | 491 | 222 | 113 |
| Dinajpur | 1927 | 56 | 24 | 14 |
| | 1928 | 64 | 17 | 10 |
| | 1929 | 39 | 20 | 11 |
| | 1930 | 84 | 17 | 20 |
| | 1931 | 156 | 19 | 36 |
| | 1932 | 118 | 27 | 17 |
| | 1933 | 128 | 19 | 27 |
| | 1934 | 105 | 14 | 16 |
| | 1935 | 97 | 21 | 12 |
| | | 847 | 178 | 163 |
| Rangpur | 1927 | 60 | 33 | 40 |
| | 1928 | 65 | 27 | 48 |
| | 1929 | 70 | 23 | 40 |
| | 1930 | 116 | 29 | 67 |
| | 1931 | 188 | 31 | 65 |
| | 1932 | 111 | 54 | 57 |
| | 1933 | 83 | 45 | 26 |
| | 1934 | 73 | 31 | 35 |
| | 1935 | 73 | 32 | 28 |
| | | 839 | 305 | 406 |
| Jalpaiguri | 1927 | 23 | 21 | 14 |
| | 1928 | 19 | 21 | 11 |
| | 1929 | 29 | 17 | 11 |
| | 1930 | 34 | 25 | 9 |
| | 1931 | 64 | 37 | 12 |
| | 1932 | 50 | 21 | 14 |
| | 1933 | 51 | 22 | 11 |
| | 1934 | 31 | 18 | 6 |
| | 1935 | 43 | 20 | 10 |
| | | 344 | 202 | 98 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Darjeeling | 1927 | 10 | 4 | 2 |
| | 1928 | 11 | 6 | 0 |
| | 1929 | 4 | 6 | 2 |
| | 1930 | 15 | 5 | 2 |
| | 1931 | 16 | 6 | 1 |
| | 1932 | 14 | 5 | 4 |
| | 1933 | 11 | 6 | 4 |
| | 1934 | 8 | 8 | 4 |
| | 1935 | 12 | 4 | 2 |
| | | 101 | 50 | 21 |
| Malda | 1927 | 19 | 26 | 7 |
| | 1928 | 32 | 14 | 7 |
| | 1929 | 18 | 18 | 11 |
| | 1930 | 31 | 20 | 14 |
| | 1931 | 81 | 13 | 11 |
| | 1932 | 64 | 15 | 11 |
| | 1933 | 54 | 17 | 8 |
| | 1934 | 54 | 19 | 12 |
| | 1935 | 49 | 9 | 8 |
| | | 402 | 151 | 89 |
| Bogra | 1927 | 45 | 13 | 20 |
| | 1938 | 36 | 20 | 14 |
| | 1929 | 29 | 20 | 14 |
| | 1930 | 38 | 26 | 16 |
| | 1931 | 100 | 18 | 14 |
| | 1932 | 73 | 33 | 10 |
| | 1933 | 30 | 16 | 11 |
| | 1934 | 50 | 22 | 12 |
| | 1935 | 23 | 15 | 14 |
| | | 424 | 183 | 125 |
| Pabna | 1927 | 39 | 24 | 54 |
| | 1928 | 34 | 12 | 31 |
| | 1929 | 31 | 28 | 28 |
| | 1930 | 34 | 22 | 47 |
| | 1931 | 63 | 20 | 18 |
| | 1932 | 77 | 31 | 28 |
| | 1933 | 38 | 19 | 14 |
| | 1934 | 36 | 17 | 15 |
| | 1935 | 29 | 16 | 9 |
| | | 381 | 189 | 244 |

Incidents of crimes in the districts of Burdwan and
Presidency Division, 1927-35.

| ,, | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|---|
| <u>BURDWAN DIVISION</u> | | | | | |
| Burdwan | 1927 | 69 | 23 | 22 | |
| | 1928 | 113 | 30 | 37 | |
| | 1929 | 86 | 32 | 29 | |
| | 1930 | 115 | 24 | 71 | |
| | 1931 | 141 | 21 | 26 | |
| | 1932 | 116 | 36 | 23 | |
| | 1933 | 109 | 22 | 26 | |
| | 1934 | 123 | 31 | 23 | |
| | 1935 | 110 | 37 | 18 | |
| | | 982 | 256 | 275 | |
| Birdhum | 1927 | 25 | 18 | 6 | |
| | 1928 | 64 | 10 | 3 | |
| | 1929 | 30 | 19 | 6 | |
| | 1930 | 44 | 8 | 32 | |
| | 1931 | 66 | 7 | 5 | |
| | 1932 | 49 | 10 | 3 | |
| | 1933 | 57 | 17 | 9 | |
| | 1934 | 46 | 11 | 4 | |
| | 1935 | 75 | 17 | 6 | |
| | | 456 | 117 | 74 | |
| Bankura | 1927 | 13 | 10 | 8 | |
| | 1928 | 10 | 11 | 4 | |
| | 1929 | 23 | 10 | 8 | |
| | 1930 | 29 | 8 | 9 | |
| | 1931 | 28 | 13 | 2 | |
| | 1932 | 44 | 18 | 8 | |
| | 1933 | 59 | 18 | 7 | |
| | 1934 | 67 | 15 | 4 | |
| | 1935 | 59 | 21 | 7 | |
| | | 332 | 124 | 57 | |
| Midnapur | 1927 | 140 | 30 | 20 | |
| | 1928 | 128 | 60 | 45 | |
| | 1929 | 127 | 39 | 22 | |
| | 1930 | 188 | 38 | 57 | |
| | 1931 | 349 | 40 | 52 | |
| | 1932 | 326 | 49 | 53 | |
| | 1933 | 303 | 30 | 42 | |
| | 1934 | 195 | 36 | 40 | |
| | 1935 | 188 | 50 | 23 | |
| | | 1944 | 375 | 354 | |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Hooghly | 1927 | 48 | 13 | 17 |
| | 1928 | 58 | 18 | 20 |
| | 1929 | 56 | 13 | 22 |
| | 1930 | 68 | 19 | 35 |
| | 1931 | 79 | 29 | 26 |
| | 1932 | 109 | 19 | 13 |
| | 1933 | 104 | 26 | 18 |
| | 1934 | 86 | 17 | 8 |
| | 1935 | 93 | 16 | 12 |
| | | 701 | 170 | 171 |
| Howrah | 1927 | 48 | 16 | 13 |
| | 1928 | 28 | 15 | 47 |
| | 1929 | 43 | 16 | 24 |
| | 1930 | 62 | 20 | 44 |
| | 1931 | 76 | 26 | 36 |
| | 1932 | 63 | 21 | 19 |
| | 1933 | 65 | 23 | 17 |
| | 1934 | 59 | 14 | 33 |
| | 1935 | 61 | 31 | 14 |
| | | 505 | 182 | 247 |

PRESIDENCY DIVISION

| | | | | |
|-------------|------|------|-----|-----|
| 24-Parganas | 1927 | 130 | 48 | 28 |
| | 1928 | 96 | 57 | 48 |
| | 1929 | 102 | 66 | 52 |
| | 1930 | 129 | 58 | 94 |
| | 1931 | 154 | 64 | 82 |
| | 1932 | 134 | 71 | 60 |
| | 1933 | 195 | 67 | 76 |
| | 1934 | 155 | 67 | 81 |
| | 1935 | 138 | 76 | 50 |
| | | 1233 | 574 | 571 |
| Nadia | 1927 | 69 | 25 | 11 |
| | 1928 | 72 | 17 | 13 |
| | 1929 | 69 | 21 | 20 |
| | 1930 | 104 | 20 | 30 |
| | 1931 | 144 | 18 | 18 |
| | 1932 | 96 | 23 | 18 |
| | 1933 | 76 | 19 | 4 |
| | 1934 | 113 | 25 | 4 |
| | 1935 | 109 | 31 | 16 |
| | | 852 | 199 | 147 |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Murshidabad | 1927 | 56 | 27 | 9 |
| | 1928 | 76 | 26 | 10 |
| | 1929 | 44 | 26 | 7 |
| | 1930 | 44 | 27 | 12 |
| | 1931 | 68 | 26 | 11 |
| | 1932 | 71 | 22 | 18 |
| | 1933 | 47 | 24 | 14 |
| | 1934 | 41 | 18 | 33 |
| | 1935 | 62 | 21 | 14 |
| | | 511 | 217 | 123 |
| Jessore | 1927 | 22 | 22 | 25 |
| | 1928 | 21 | 29 | 26 |
| | 1929 | 44 | 23 | 33 |
| | 1930 | 46 | 29 | 57 |
| | 1931 | 51 | 42 | 38 |
| | 1932 | 91 | 41 | 54 |
| | 1933 | 69 | 48 | 38 |
| | 1934 | 52 | 19 | 21 |
| | 1935 | 48 | 22 | 36 |
| | | 444 | 275 | 328 |
| Khulna | 1927 | 19 | 36 | 31 |
| | 1928 | 18 | 39 | 21 |
| | 1929 | 16 | 35 | 23 |
| | 1930 | 49 | 45 | 96 |
| | 1931 | 86 | 59 | 40 |
| | 1932 | 112 | 45 | 37 |
| | 1933 | 106 | 37 | 31 |
| | 1934 | 76 | 47 | 42 |
| | 1935 | 54 | 48 | 35 |
| | | 536 | 391 | 356 |
| Calcutta | 1927 | 22 | 16 | 25 |
| | 1928 | 15 | 23 | 27 |
| | 1929 | 19 | 16 | 19 |
| | 1930 | 29 | 20 | 94 |
| | 1931 | 24 | 28 | 13 |
| | 1932 | 34 | 32 | 141 |
| | 1933 | 26 | 28 | 36 |
| | 1934 | 20 | 21 | 21 |
| | 1935 | 16 | 18 | 25 |
| | | 205 | 202 | 401 |

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IX. PROSCRIBED CONTEMPORARY PUBLICATIONS (India Office Library and Records)

A. In English : Pamphlets

Manifesto of the young comrade's League

To the Students of Bengal

To the Warring People of India

What our Students do?

Workers of Calcutta

Workers, students and citizens of Calcutta

B. In Bengali

(i) Pamphlets in original

Bhadra, B., Amar Desh (My country), Calcutta, n.d., circa, 1933.

Dev, S., Purna swadhinata Chai Keno? (Why do we want complete independence?), Karimganj, n.d., circa 1930

Jago, Jago, Shakti Pujar Din Agata Oi (Awake, arise, the day for Shakti-worship is come), n.p., n.d., circa, 1933

Let the dogs bark (the)caravan passes on, n. p. , n. d. , circa 1932

Pulis Kartrik Masjid Apabitra (A mosque is defiled by the Police) n. p. , n. d. , circa, 1932

Rakta Chai, Rakta Chai, Sudhu Rakta Chai (We want blood, only blood, nothing but blood), n. p. , n. d. , circa 1933.

Sabas ! Bimal Sabas!! (Bravo; Bimal, Bravo) n. p. , n. d. , circa 1931

Sanyal, S. ,

Deshbasir prati nibedan (An appeal to the fellow-countrymen), Shantipur, n. d. circa 1925.

Swadhin Bharat (Independent India) Four different versions, n. p. , n. d. , circa 1916, 1917, 1930 and 1932.

(ii) Pamphlets. English translation by Bengal Government. P&J
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Bamlar Chhatra Bandhuganer Prati (To the student friends of Bengal)

Bamlar Tarun Prati (To the youth of Bengal)

Bamtar Yubo-bandhu o shramik Bhai Sab (To all the young friends and fellow workers of Bengal)

Bhai Tarun Mone Rekho Ai (Young Brethren, this you must remember)

Biswabani (The universal voice)

Deshar Dak (The call of the country)

Dhandora (ঝুগুগু)

Kalboishakhir Pratam Damka Batas (The first breath of the fierce Nor' wester)

March onward, March onward, Brother

Nibedan (An appeal)

Nirjatiter Artanad (The groaning of the oppressed)

Rakta Bina Hey Deshbhakta Desh na Swadhin Habe (Oh patriots, without blood-shed your country will never be free)

Rakte Amar Legechche aj Sharbanasher Nesha (To-day the intoxication of destruction is flowing through my veins)

- (iii) Pamphlets. English translation by Bengal Government - Bengali titles of pamphlets not mentioned. P&J File No.4588 of 1929, L/P&J/6/1991

Red Leaflet

Students of Bengal Remember thy brothers and sisters in jail (to-day) - the country needs you

Young Friends of Bengal

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